

# PRISON KILLING TECHNIQUES BLADE, BLUDGEON AND BOMB



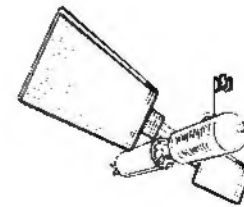
BY RALF DEAN OMAR



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*by*  
**Ralf Dean Omar**



**Loompanics Unlimited  
Port Townsend, Washington**

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## **Prison Killing Techniques Blade, Bludgeon and Bomb**

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## DEDICATION TO

Peter Gilbert, L.Cronin and the Warriors of the Zendokan  
 to  
 Michael (Thorr) Colombo, Paul (Butch) Riley  
 to  
 Terry (Red) Williams, Dave (Sinner) Gradick  
 to  
 Steve (Choirboy) Hickman  
 and to  
 Mark Edward Badilo for his fine illustrations.

## Who This Book Was Written For

*Correctional Officers and Prison Administrators*, the front line troops who must witness daily and involve themselves in bloody confrontations between two or more prisoners or, worse yet, those who themselves risk daily becoming victims of such attacks, will benefit from studying this book.

*Law Enforcement Personnel* will benefit from studying this book, since unrepentant criminals so often take the killing techniques they have learned or, at the very least, honed while in prison, back to the streets when released.

*Martial Artists* will find the *realistic* fighting and killing techniques contained in this text both fascinating and far-removed from much of the superfluous posturings taught in modern martial arts diploma mills.

*Anyone* whose lifestyle or job might conceivably bring them into contact with this nation's fast-growing prison system — and the subcultural survivalists who hunt there — will benefit from reading this book.

Often times, we don't stop to consider how our moral or religious convictions might one day put us in harm's way, offending the powers-that-be, marking us as the latest Randy Weaver or Paul Hill, until it is too late, we don't consider how our politically incorrect attitude of defending ourselves and our loved ones might brand us the next Bernhard Goetz.

An unintentional DUI-induced manslaughter or a failure to kowtow quickly and correctly to the IRS, and even the most honest citizens can find themselves on the first bus to "The Big House."

These examples aside, why should the average person care how imprisoned predators kill each other?

If nothing else, the "Steel Nation" is a fantastic study in *survival*.

For anyone interested in survival, this book is a must read.

If you can survive inside the unforgiving four walls of prison where there is little room to run and absolutely no place to hide, then you can survive anywhere!

Consider the unique demands of the prison survival scenario:

- *Nowhere to run*, nowhere to hide.
- *No weapons* except those *Environmental Weapons* you are able to glean from your immediate surroundings and then, only those weapons you can successfully hide from frequent searches.
- *No second chances*. Your first strike must be perfect since, for one thing, you are in constant danger of being caught and having additional time added to your sentence.

Second, you can't afford to miss. The target you miss today will be the revenge-minded prisoner who tomorrow targets you.

In many ways, prison is *the ultimate self-defense challenge*. You check your guns at the door.

Here, you quickly learn the difference between training and experience.

You may have *trained* for years to survive on foreign terrain. You may have *trained* 20 years in karate or some other martial art. You may be very well *trained*, but inside the confines of the Steel Nation, *experience* is what counts.

Here, no punches are pulled as they are in *training*.

Here, the tattooed biker with five years *experience* kicks the ass of the black belt with 20 years *training*.

Here, even if you succeed in avoiding streetside foes, psychos and other violence-prone individuals, you may still find yourself caught up in *The Riot* and forced to kill or be killed.

Even special protection offered to threatened prisoners by prison administrators is no guarantee of safety:

- Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1980: thirty-three inmates dead in rioting; most of the slaughtered inmates were suspected informers being housed in the institution's Protective Custody Unit.
- Montana State Prison, 1991: five suspected inmate informers killed during a prison uprising.
- Lucasville, Ohio, 1993: Nine suspected inmate informers killed during an 11-day siege.

No place to run, no place to hide.

Here, trapped under tons of stone and steel, you come face-to-face with every kind of killer imaginable, from the blood-eyed, drug-crazed berserker to the quiet, bespectacled gentleman who just happens to have slaughtered eleven members of his family or the effeminate former male nurse responsible for 50-plus poisonings.

Here, you are forced to answer "the reporter's six questions," though here, those questions take on a much more urgent, much more deadly meaning and are subject to a much

more arbitrary and unforgiving editor. Here, a "deadline" is just that!

- *Who* will attack you? Answer: Anyone and everyone.
- *What* kind of weapon will they employ? Answer: Anything and everything.
- *When* will they attack? Answer: When you least expect it.
- *Where* will they attack? Answer: Where you least expect it: while you are lifting weights, while you are going through the chow-line, while you're buck-naked in the shower, while you are sleeping, or while you are sitting on the toilet.
- *How* will they come for you? Answer: From behind your back, through a friend-turned-traitor, through a hired assassin, through an informant's kite, or through a bought-off guard.
- *Why?* Answer: You don't need a reason in the Steel Nation! And the final question: *Will you survive?*

Do you know how to defend yourself against attack?

Do you have the mental attitude and the intestinal fortitude to survive, not just a single encounter, but *years* under stress and threat of death?

Do you know where to find and how to use the environmental weapons provided by your surroundings?

If you can't confidently answer "Yes" or if you honestly don't know the answer to these questions... then this book was written for *you*.

## Introduction

After the publication of my book *Steel Nation: How to Survive and Prosper in Prison* (Alpha Publications of Ohio, 1995), I received numerous requests to elaborate on the brutally effective self-defense and life-taking strategies and techniques employed by prisoners.

Given the fact that in June, 1994, the number of individuals being held in America's prisons topped one million, as well as recent media coverage of such notable Steel Nation events as the 1993 eleven-day riot at the Ohio State Prison at Lucasville and the November, 1994 bludgeoning death of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, it comes as no surprise that the average citizen might be more than a little curious about what goes on inside today's prisons.

In doing research for this book, I was shocked as well as impressed with the ingenuity of prisoners in finding and manufacturing weapons even under the most restrictive circumstances.



As the author of three previous works on environmental weapons, I can honestly say that, with the possible exception of the medieval Ninja of Japan, I have never discovered a subculture or group who has so completely mastered the ability to draw defensive and offensive hardware directly from their surroundings as the survivors of the Steel Nation.

Keep in mind that prisoners are severely restricted in the amount of personal property they can possess, and what property they are permitted to possess is subject to search and seizure at a moment's notice. Any weapons prisoners do have must either be easily concealed or must blend in, inconspicuously, with the sparse furnishings of a prison cell.

Prisoners use a multitude of environmental weapons both to defend themselves and in assaults on other prisoners and on their keepers. Interestingly enough, whether talking about a French penal colony in the first half of this century or a modern walled prison in America's heartland, the use of environmental weapons by prisoners remains constant.

For example, in his best-selling autobiography *Papillon*, ex-convict Henri Charriere describes his ordeal as a prisoner in the French penal archipelago off the north coast of South America in the first half of the century, describing as well the types and techniques of environmental weapons used by him and his fellow prisoners.

Charriere describes how prisoners, to protect themselves, openly carried knives made from any piece of scrap metal available. In such desperate circumstances, any iron spoon that could be stolen was quickly converted into a dagger. Charriere was required on more than one occasion to defend his life, and to kill, using a homemade knife.

Charriere graphically relates the various ways inmates managed to kill one another in such places as the infamous Devil's Island: knifing, bludgeoning, strangling, poisoning.

According to Charriere, when approaching another inmate with the intention of killing him, the killer would first use a ploy to either distract the intended victim's attention or employ a pre-emptive "softening up" move designed to incapacitate the victim, preparing the sheep for slaughter.

One such "softening up" ploy involved throwing scalding water into the victim's face. Another "softening up" strategy described by Charriere took place after a friend of Charriere's took revenge by stabbing to death his friend's two murderers. The avenger killed the two killers by approaching their beds in the middle of the night and flashing the bright beam of a flashlight directly into their eyes. Temporarily blinded and paralyzed like rabbits trapped in a car's headlights, both men were easily killed.

A thousand miles north and forty-odd years later, prisoners were still using the weapons provided by their dark environment to kill their fellow prisoners.

*Statesville*, an excellent study of Illinois' maximum-security state prison, by J.B. Jacobs (1977), gives us a sampling of environmental weapons used by prisoners to assault both inmates and employees at Statesville between 1966 and 1973. These include:

Year	Type of Environmental Weapon Used
1966	Shovel, homemade knife ("shank")
1967	Razor
1971	Razor, spear (fashioned from a fluorescent bulb), steel bars (victim smashed into)
1972	Baseball bat, lead pipe, iron bar, "shank," salt shaker
1973	Stick, table, mop handle.



By the 1990s, while the world on the outside has moved ahead, little has changed within the Steel Nation so far as violence is concerned.

Prisoners, kept in a state of perpetual powerlessness, compensate by terrorizing and enslaving their fellow inmates. The anger and frustration these prisoners feel toward "The World," in general and "The (prison) Administration" in particular is all too often taken out on the prisoner next to them.

As a result, usury and sexual slavery, assault, rape and murder are facts of life for an inmate in one of America's prisons.

To survive in the Steel Nation, a prisoner must develop both a cynical and savage attitude, as well as a familiarity with the weapons available to him. Prisoners failing to do this *die*. It is as simple as that.

You'll find no *theory* in this book, only the tried and the true, the quick and the dead. The tricks, techniques and treacheries presented in this book are gleaned from actual incidents of assault and murder having taken place in one prison or another. These are methods that have been used and reused and honed to a deadly skill over the years. Many of the techniques presented in this book are lethal legacies that have passed from one generation of felons to the next, from older cons to the newly-arrived, by prisoners who have had to use them to save their own lives or to take the life of a fellow inmate... the two — defense and offense — being one and the same in the cold, unforgiving confines of the Steel Nation.

## Chapter One

### Mind Set Preparation

Nothing truly prepares you for violence, just as nothing — no book, no movie, not even first-hand accounts — could prepare you for doing time in the Steel Nation.

Some are born with a natural instinct for survival. Others spend their whole lives sweating to acquire the skills necessary to survive. An infuriating few just seem to muddle through!

What we lack in instinct, we must make up for in study. Knowing yourself, knowing your foes and knowing your options in any given situation are the main prerequisites for survival in any threatening situation, whether outside on the mean streets or inside the even meaner Steel Nation.

Prepare yourself for the eventual arrival of danger. Set your mind to surviving, even if it means the death of your detractors. *Study to survive!*



## Attitude

In any successful survival scenario, it is a positive mental attitude that carries the day. As with any major challenge in life, what you set your mind to accomplish is more often than not what you end up doing.

In facing the reality of surviving a "bit" in the Steel Nation, there are two factors of attitude that the first-timer must decide upon: Your attitude toward others and your attitude toward yourself.

You need to decide *beforehand* how you are going to deal with Steel Nation violence.

If you are only doing a short amount of time until your hearing before the parole board, you might opt to let an affront to your person or property pass. If the situation is serious enough, you might decide to do the rest of your "bit" in the prison's Protective Custody Unit. On the other hand, if you are doing a considerable amount of time until your *first* parole board review or the expiration of your sentence, you might instead realize that you can hardly allow yourself to be ridiculed, abused and otherwise preyed upon for *years*. Nor can you seriously consider spending *years* of your life in a Protective Custody Unit that, in many prisons, varies little from solitary confinement.

Even hiding in protective custody is no guarantee you will be left alone. As already mentioned, most of the thirty-three prisoners butchered during the 1980 New Mexico prison riot were inmates housed in the prison's Protective Custody Unit.

The point is, you can never be 100% safe while doing time.

At any given moment, you can be attacked by another prisoner and be forced to defend yourself. More often than not, defending yourself in the Steel Nation entails striking the first (and last!) blow

Defending yourself begins the first day you walk into the Steel Nation. How you walk and how you carry yourself will determine to a great extent how your fellow prisoners approach you.

Like the muggers, rapists and other street predators most convicts were before coming to "the joint," Steel Nation residents have a keen knack when it comes to sizing up potential prey, for culling the young, the weak, the unwary, and the less fleet of foot from the herd.

Do you carry yourself in a self-assured, perhaps even arrogant manner, defiantly erect? Or did you enter the stone and steel jungle tightly gripping your bedding, casting about fearful and furtive glances, jumping at every noise? Do you walk with your eyes downcast, or meet others' challenging gaze?

All of these things tell the long-time citizens of the Steel Nation a lot about you. Everything from the trembling way you light a smoke, to your tattoos — or lack of — tell your fellow prisoners something about you.

Does your attitude say "Confidence" or "I'm a bad-ass come looking for trouble?" Is that air of confidence you project real or contrived? The veterans of the Steel Nation can spot a phony a cellblock away.

The best attitude to embrace upon entering prison, especially if you are a "fish" just starting your sentence, is to remind yourself that others have survived and even prospered in the Steel Nation on less brains or less physical prowess than you might possess.

If you set your mind on surviving, you can. But always remember that your surviving will depend on both your ability to defend against violence from your fellow inmates *and* your ability to dish out violence should it become necessary.

How you do your "bit" is up to you.



Some Steel Nation residents fight literally tooth and nail every day to maintain their dignity and integrity against unpredictable fellow prisoners, vindictive and brutal staff, and the sheer oppressive weight of the years facing them.

Other prisoners seek shelter in the cold isolation of protective custody. Still others placate prison predators through the bartering of their flesh.

Some find release through a handful of pills, a razor blade, or at the end of a frayed rope.

The only thing distinguishing these individuals from one another is their *attitude* toward life in general, and doing time in the Steel Nation in particular.

## Reality Check

When making a realistic assessment of your chances for defending yourself and surviving an attack while in the Steel Nation (or on the street for that matter), three things must be taken into consideration:

Your abilities,

The abilities and aims of your opponents, and

Your environment.

### *Your Abilities*

Are you *mentally* able to withstand the stress and trauma of an attack to your person? Is your mind set in determination to survive and overcome your opponent by doing what has to be done? Can you set your mind to killing another human being, even in self-defense? Or will you stop short of finishing off a downed opponent... providing him the opportunity to recover and resume his attack?

Are you *physically* able to withstand an attack?

Are you qualified in any martial arts or do you have any other physical training — boxing, weight training — that might aid you in flight or fight?

Do you exercise regularly? Or are you an overweight smoker?

Do you have a good “gas” (aerobic endurance) required to “go the distance” in a kill-or-be-killed situation?

Is your body in good enough shape to survive the physical trauma of a knife wound? Are your arms strong enough to fend off a bludgeon attack?

Speaking of weight training, a movement is presently underway to remove weights and weight lifting equipment from prisons.

According to legislators who are pushing for a ban on weight training equipment in prisons, prisoners can too easily use weight equipment as weapons or as rioting tools. As an example, they cite the 1993 riot in Lucasville, Ohio, where prisoners used barbells to smash through a cinder-block wall in order to get at a guard and an inmate informant barricaded in a stairwell. Subsequently, the guard was taken hostage and the inmate informer killed.

Legislators also argue that bulked-up inmates cause too many problems inside and outside of prison after release (Reibstein, 1994:89).

Bottom line: the better overall shape you are in, mentally and physically, the better able you will be to both withstand an attack and to dish out violence should it become necessary.

Know yourself.

### *The Abilities of Your Opponents*

Who is the enemy? How serious are they about taking your head off? Are they likely to be satisfied with just kicking your ass or will they go all the way and kill you? You must always



assume the latter. How many of them are there? How are they connected? Are they family, friends, or do they belong to an organized gang?

If they belong to a gang, how well organized are they? Is there a recognized leader? Will the "gang" dissolve if the leader is killed? Have you done something to offend the gang as a whole or is it a personal beef between you and one of the members? Are they the type to attack you directly or will they employ subterfuge? You must always assume the latter.

If facing a single attacker, does he know martial arts, is he a boxer? Knowing that an enemy favors a particular fighting style is a great help to you when plotting your defense.

What is his past record of assault? Is he a talker or a doer? Is he the type to come at you personally or will he send a simple-minded and easily manipulated "gobot" on a "mission" against you? Is he the type to attack you directly with a blade, bludgeon, or bomb, or is he the type to employ a non-violent — but no less effective — method to get you out of his way.

Know your enemy.

### ***Your Environment***

In a life-threatening situation, will your environment aid or hamper you?

What is there in your environment that is a danger to you? What tools can you find in your surroundings that you can use to defend yourself or to kill an opponent?

Where are the blind spots in the prison recreation yard, in the hallways, or in the cellblock where you can be cornered by one or more attackers?

Are you safe in your cell? Can the cell door be jimmied or otherwise opened from the outside by another inmate? Is the cell front open enough for a fire-bomb to be thrown in on you while you sleep? Could you be stabbed through the bars with a homemade spear while you sit on your bunk or on the toilet?

What about your neighbors in the cells on either side of yours?

What about your cellmate? Can he be trusted? Would a bribe or a threat induce him to slip something into your coffee or otherwise set you up?

What about the guards? Could they be bribed into opening your cell door or into looking the other way while two or more attackers "bum-rush" you?

Can you go to the shower, the chow hall or the chapel in relative safety?

Knowing your environment means being aware of your surroundings: where you are in the most danger, where you are most likely to be attacked, where you can find shelter if need be.

Your surroundings also provide you with numerous *environmental weapons* you can use to either fend off attackers or to kill off enemies.

In simplest terms, an environmental weapon is any object, condition or ploy, inherent in your immediate surroundings, that you can use as a defensive or offensive aid to survival.

Denied access to guns and other traditional "bought" weapons, over the years prisoners have developed a myriad of make-shift weapons and ploys they can use to terrorize and kill their fellow prisoners.

To a citizen of the Steel Nation, a mop is a *spear* waiting to happen; a sock filled with batteries is a "*soap-on-a-rope*" bludgeon; the cross-bar on a typewriter, an *ice pick*.

In addition to these "manufactured" environmental weapons, inmates also know how to wield a brick, a piece of pipe, a razor blade, or a shard of glass with deadly skill. The list is endless.

No matter where you find yourself at any given moment, you should always be aware of the tools and weapons your environment has to offer, not just so you can use them, but



also so you will not be surprised by an attacker, himself wielding an environmental weapon.

Know your environment.

The more you make yourself aware of your own assets and limitations, the abilities and weaknesses of your enemies, and the surprises and succor offered by your surroundings, the better your odds of surviving, whether inside prison or out.

## The Fatal Eight

In prison, survival is measured by what you can *avoid*.

Nothing can assure your survival during your stay in the Steel Nation. However, avoiding these "fatal eight" can give you a running start:

### Gangs

In prison, degrees of affiliation run from individuals you are forced to keep company with (cellmates, fellow workers) to those you voluntarily associate with: recreational workout partners, associates in administration-sanctioned clubs and self-help groups.

Other groups are formed by individuals who knew each other "in a previous life" (i.e., out on the street). Such loose-knit groups are generally referred to as *cliques* or *crews*.

Other, more formally organized/ritualized groups qualify as full-blown gangs. These gangs are usually drawn along racial lines: Los Hermanos (Latinos), various incarnations of the Aryan Brotherhood and the Black Guerilla Family, as well as a bevy of bizarre pseudo-religious cults.

As everywhere else in life, in prison you are known — to other prisoners *and* to the Administration — by the company you keep.

It is inevitable that you interact to some degree with your fellow prisoners. Do not, however, make the mistake of becoming involved with recognized gangs or with cliques known for trouble-making or illegal activity.

Refuse favors from anyone you think might be gang affiliated, as this may obligate you — in the collective mind of the gang — to some future recompense.

If asked to join such a gang, decline *carefully*, but decline. Dismissing a gang's offer to join them must be done with tact in order to avoid pissing them off.

By offhandedly turning down what they consider to be the "honor" of joining them, laughing at or otherwise "dis-ing" their colors (gang emblems), can mark you as a target. As a result, the *next* fool that *wants* to join their gang — whether for protection or status — might be given a test of loyalty that entails "making his bones" by killing you.

Individuals attracted to gangs tend to have very low self-esteem. These "wannabe" gangbangers will do anything to win acceptance into a gang and then will do everything — up to and including murder — to maintain their status in their newfound prison "family."

In order to better protect yourself, educate yourself to the different types of dress and emblems that identify different prison gangs (different colored bandanas, ball caps, tattoos, etc.) in order to avoid offending gang members by accident.

Likewise, make yourself aware of any special areas of the prison frequented (i.e., "controlled") by any specific gang, so as to avoid inadvertently "trespassing" gang turf.

### Drugs

Drugs are for sick people. They help sick people get well, and they make well people sick.



The lure of escaping — even temporarily — from the stark reality of prison life through the use of drugs is attractive. Just remember the Icarus Rule: The higher you fly, the further you fall.

Inside prison and out, drugs impede your judgment and your ability to defend yourself.

Using or dealing in drugs brings you into contact with some of the most dangerous individuals prison has to offer — endangering you more than any other single venture you might become involved in while in prison.

Inmates will kill you for your drugs. They will also kill you for someone who will pay them in drugs.

A common prison ploy is to get a young, naïve “fish” high on “free” drugs before taking advantage of him sexually. A more lethal ploy involves getting an intended murder victim intoxicated in order to make killing him easier. This is known as “rocking an enemy to sleep,” i.e., getting him to drop his guard.

Avoid drugs.

## Sex

Avoid sex while in prison, whether with other inmates or prison staff members.

If you choose to involve yourself in homosexual activity while in prison, you will be entering a high ritualistic subculture within a subculture, one that thrives on usury, violence, and modern-day slavery.

If you are implicated — whether guilty or not — in passive-receptive homosexual activity, you then become a target for homophobic inmates and staff on the one hand, and aggressive, sadistic “straight” prisoners on the other hand who have few qualms about regularly using willing fellow prisoners and, when necessary, forcing unwilling prisoners

into homosexual acts, while never questioning their self-image of being “straight.”

One of the most difficult things for the uninitiated outsider to understand about sex in prison is the sharp distinction prisoners make between “dominant” and “passive” homosexual activity. In the skewed Steel Nation view of life, the dominant-insertor “man” in a homosexual act is *not* considered a homosexual (i.e., “weak”). However, the passive-insertee “boy” is considered homosexual, and thus prey for prison pimps and other predators.

This arbitrary delineation is necessary for helping to maintain some semblance of order in an already chaotic environment.

This “man-boy” role playing is rigidly adhered to — at least outwardly — in order for the “man” — the initiator and controller in such a relationship, yet one unable to acknowledge his own homosexuality — to retain his self-image as “straight.”

One of the best-kept secrets so far as the Steel Nation is concerned is the frequency of homosexual relationships developing between staff and prisoners.

Traditionally, in male prisons, when a male staff member and a prisoner are caught *flagrante delicto*, the embarrassed staff member is allowed to resign quietly, while the prisoner is hurriedly transferred to another institution. Indiscrete female staff, on the other hand, are more often than not summarily dismissed and/or prosecuted.

However, with increasing numbers of women becoming correctional officers, the unwritten policy of sweeping homosexual indiscretion under the rug is being discarded. Increasingly, “indiscrete” male and female staff are being prosecuted in order to avoid charges of gender bias.



As a prisoner, if it's discovered you are intimately involved with a staff member — heterosexual or homosexual — you are guaranteed to come out on the short end of the stick.

Bottom line: In this, the "Age of AIDS," the less sex you have with anyone — period — the safer you are.

### ***Debt and Gambling***

Polonius' advice to Laertes still rings true: "Neither a borrower nor a lender be," especially in the Steel Nation.

Not borrowing — or even accepting free gifts — from persons unknown will keep you from owing debts to others, debts that sooner or later will require payment, perhaps in flesh, yours or another's.

Not lending keeps you from having to deal with individuals whose "sacred word" to repay you means nothing to them. If you loan to a fellow prisoner and the borrower fails to repay you and you, in turn, fail to vigorously — and violently, if need be — pursue the delinquent debt, other opportunistic predators will treat your failure to "take care of business" as a sign of weakness.

### ***Stealing***

Stealing from your fellow prisoners is analogous to pilfering food from fellow lifeboat passengers.

While vacationing in the Steel Nation, do not buy or trade any property whose ownership you have not vigorously verified. Better yet, refrain from buying or trading anything with another prisoner.

In turn, it is *your* responsibility to protect your own property from theft. As a general rule, the less you have, the less you have for someone to steal.

### ***Snitching***

Informants will forever remain at the bottom of the Steel Nation barrel.

Don't believe offers from prison authorities of special treatment, protection, transfer to a lesser-security prison, or early release in exchange for turning informant.

By the same token, if illegal activity is going on in an area of the prison where you happen to be, walk away from that area immediately.

Inmates are notorious for blaming their stupidity on others. Should a dope deal or other legal activity go sour, criminals in general and inmates in particular tend to look around for anyone — other than themselves — they can blame for the failure of their ill-planned and poorly executed venture. If you happen to be standing around gawking when drugs change hands or violence occurs, you could all too easily be accused of snitching when the misadventure fails and the malefactors are caught.

### ***Trickbags***

"Trickbag" is Steel Nation slang for con games and no-win situations opportunistic inmates try forcing naïve and unwary prisoners into.

The goal of the trickbag is to close off all of a victim's possible escape routes and herd him into a trickbag-trap from which there is no escape except through payment of a fine or flesh.

A simple trickbag: a friendly-acting inmate allows you the "free" use of his radio. Upon your returning the radio to him, he claims you have broken it and must now pay him for it. Perhaps he will tell you the radio actually belongs to a third — and fiercer — inmate likewise demanding payment, payment

in commissary or payment in the form of doing him a "special favor"...

A more serious trickbag involves a homosexual "man" sending his "boy" to entice a naïve prisoner into a "swap-out" (two-way receptive sex). The boy's "man" arrives at the opportune time to catch the two in the act. The "man" then extorts the inmate caught in the trickbag for money, sex, or both by threatening to reveal that the inmate is a closeted homosexual.

Likewise, avoid participating in setting another inmate up for a trickbag.

The advice to avoid becoming a victim of a prison trickbag is the same as that given for avoiding confidence swindlers on the outside: If a deal looks too good to be true... it probably is!

### ***The Riot***

Since 1970, nearly 400 riots have raged in U.S. prisons (*Prison Life* magazine, October, 1994). Given these statistics, the abhorrent conditions in many prisons, and the fact that overcrowding has become the norm rather than the exception, sooner or later the institution you are in will explode.

If you are lucky, the disturbance at your particular facility will be an organized, non-violent work stoppage designed to peacefully protest conditions. If such a sit-down occurs, avoid crossing any prisoner strike line. ("Scabs" are dealt with quite harshly in the Steel Nation!) Avoid becoming a spokesperson for such a demonstration.

On a more serious side, you could just as easily find yourself trapped in a full-fledged slay-fest with crazed prisoners trying to spill as much blood as possible before what passes for order is restored.

Avoid involvement in any type of violent demonstration. In the case of a full-blown riot, leave the riot area as soon as possible *without* inviting the hostility of your fellow — rioting — prisoners.

If unable to escape the riot area, protect yourself but avoid fueling the flames by harming your fellow prisoners.

If you find yourself trapped, immediately arm yourself and try to find your friends, road-dogs, or other prisoners you know to be rational.

*Never* assume you will be left unmolested if unarmed, quite the contrary.

During a race riot, you will be targeted for the color of your skin. During riots between gangs of the same race, or during riots in reaction to intolerable prison conditions, you could be targeted for being in the wrong place at the wrong time or seeing the wrong thing.

Always avoid any area where hostages are being held. This will be the most dangerous area when the prison is retaken, especially if it is retaken by force.

Avoid speaking with the media and avoid taking part in any negotiations with The Administration as this will identify you as a "ring-leader" and mark you for later prosecution (and *persecution*) from the prison administration and possibly from your fellow prisoners as well.

*Note:* If individuals are smart enough to avoid these "Fatal Eight" — especially drugs, stealing, and otherwise dealing dishonestly with their fellow human beings — while still free, they might not end up as guests of the Steel Nation in the first place.



## Your Opponents

You might foolishly hope that you will be left alone to do your time while a guest of the Steel Nation.

Not a chance.

Sooner or later some prison predator is going to try your hand to determine your worthiness to walk like a lion in this stone and steel jungle. Sooner or later you'll find yourself confronted with a situation that demands the last resort of violence.

Basically, the type of enemies you run up against in the Steel Nation fall into five categories:

Outside foes,  
Inside foes,  
Psychopaths,  
Opportunists, and  
Yourself.

### Outside Foes

If you're unlucky, anyone you offended before coming to prison you might run into again while in prison. This could be someone you offended personally or someone whose friends, relatives, or fellow gang members you might have harmed. You never know when you might run into the brother, cousin, or friend of that fellow you killed in self-defense. The relatives of someone you molested or killed might decide that merely spending the rest of your natural life in prison isn't enough to appease their family honor. That's what happened to Rudolf Tyner. In 1982, Tyner was blown to bits in his South Carolina death row cell by another inmate hired by Tyner's victim's brother.

### Inside Foes

There are a multitude of opportunities to intentionally or inadvertently offend other inmates while in prison. Citizens of the Steel Nation, paranoid of each other and pissed off at life in general, tend to be a "sensitive" lot. Steel Nation social *faux pas* such as "reckless eyeballing," "stepping on toes" (literally and figuratively), or calling a prisoner's *machismo* into question, can all cause offenses and trigger violence.

Often, naïve inmates think they can escape retribution from other prisoners by transferring to another institution. However, word travels fast along the prison grapevine and a reputation for being an informant will follow a prisoner wherever he is transferred, even if he is transferred out of state or into the Federal prison system.

Likewise, if you trespass against a prisoner in one institution, don't be surprised if his relatives or gang buddies are waiting for you when you step down off the bus at your new institution.

### Psychopaths

There are a lot of "walking wounded" stumbling around inside the Steel Nation, inmates in dire need of psychiatric treatment who are denied help either because overcrowding has spread the institution's resources too thin or simply because of apathy on the part of the staff.

Most prisoners who attack you do so for some reason, with some semblance of logic, albeit skewed logic. You might owe them money. They might be seeking revenge. At least with these kinds of attackers, you have some idea what to expect.

On the other hand, "bug-outs" — Steel Nation slang for psychiatric patients — operate under no such constraints as logic or patterned behavior. Bug-outs attack without rhyme or

reason, for real or imagined wrongs you — or the world — have done to them.

In 1979, at the Kentucky State Prison at Eddyville, a mentally disturbed prisoner who had already made parole and was soon to leave the prison, bludgeoned an inmate to death with a length of rusty pipe. Earlier in the day, the now-dead inmate had accidentally picked up the killer's state-issued towel while the two were in the prison's communal shower. Apologizing, the offending inmate had gotten the disturbed inmate a fresh towel and had subsequently forgotten the incident. Obviously, the mentally disturbed inmate hadn't.

In September, 1991, at the Ohio State Prison at Lucasville, while a group of inmates from the institution's psychiatric unit were being escorted from the chow hall, one troubled inmate suddenly punched his hand through a pane of thick security glass. Regardless of injury to his own hand, the disturbed man grabbed a sizeable sliver from the broken glass, wheeled, and attacked a fellow prisoner who had previously crossed some invisible, arbitrarily drawn border that was defined only in the disturbed man's mind.

In November, 1994, America's most notorious serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer — himself of questionable sanity — was bludgeoned to death by a disturbed inmate.

Even if you go out of your way to avoid offending "rational" inmates, at any time during your Steel Nation stay you can be attacked by an irrational "bug-out" prisoner. This is analogous to a survivalist studying all his life to survive in the desert, on snowy terrain, or while adrift at sea, only to be gunned down by some Uzi-wielding psychopath while ordering a Happy Meal at McDonald's.

### ***Opportunists***

Being so far behind, everybody in the Steel Nation is always on the lookout for anything to help them get ahead. Thieves watch for you to leave your cell door ajar so they can slip in and rip you off. Racists and religious fanatics watch for opportunities to recruit you into their fold. Homosexual "pimps" look for weaknesses and fears they can exploit. Rapists wait for you to get soap in your eyes in the shower.

### ***Yourself***

In addition to defending yourself against those who feel you have offended them in some way, psychopaths, and sundry opportunists, the time may come during your Steel Nation stay where you, yourself, might feel the necessity to resort to violence.

For instance, if you *think* someone has targeted you for termination, it might be a good idea to launch a pre-emptive strike. Waiting for the enemy to come to you is seldom good strategy.

On the flip side, being too quick on the draw, too quick to take offense at the least slight to your person puts you in the same category as other violent Steel Nation predators.

There are certain transgressions within the Steel Nation between prisoners that — under the unforgiving Convict Code — require the death penalty. True, you can be killed for anything, everything, or nothing in particular while in the Steel Nation. Still, there are certain offenses such as throwing urine or feces on another prisoner, or tampering with another prisoner's mail or family, that warrants the death penalty.

Though you may be tempted to let such transgressions pass — perhaps you are nearing your Parole Board hearing, or otherwise nearing release — failure on your part to "take care of business" by defending yourself, your property, or the



sanctity of loved ones, will result in your getting a reputation as a "punk," a weak-willed person. In the minds of your fellow prisoners, this targets you for further abuse. Once it becomes common knowledge that you can be offended with impunity, prison predators — opportunists — will beat a path to your cell door... and the beat'n' won't stop there!

In many ways, the pressure from your prison peers to perform violence for their entertainment and to keep up the "Convict Code" is another of your "opponents."

Buddha said, "No enemy can harm you half as much as your own thoughts unguarded."

How you react to a threat is up to you. Just remember Teddy Roosevelt's advice: "Do not hit at all if it can be avoided, but do not hit softly." In other words, if you do decide to do violence, *do efficient violence*. Retaliation for any offense against your person or property should be swift and final since it is potentially fatal for you to "half-step" by leaving an opponent to lick his wounds until the time he returns to give you the same — or worse! — treatment.

The Steel Nation rule — applicable to the street as well is: If it ain't worth killing over, it ain't worth fighting over. If you are not prepared to kill your opponent, then you should find a way to honorably withdraw from the situation.

If you *must* use violence in order to survive, offer no quarter and expect no mercy from your Steel Nation fellows for whom violence is, at worst, a necessity and, at best, a day's entertainment.

## Your Options: Non-Violent vs. Violent

Steel Nation self-defense options come down to either:  
Non-violent self-defense, or  
Violent self-defense

Your best defense is vigilance and awareness

Like many people on the outside, many citizens of the Steel Nation walk around in a perpetual haze, unaware of danger until it's too late. In the wrong circumstances, this lapse can prove fatal. Muggers and other street — and Steel Nation — predators love these kinds of people.

We've already established the importance of knowing your limitations, those of your enemies, and the advantages and shortcomings of your immediate surroundings.

The more you make *awareness* a natural part of your everyday existence, the safer you remain, and the better your chances of spotting trouble coming. In martial arts circles, cultivating this type of awareness is accomplished by "*internalizing*." Simply put, internalizing means practicing a technique (such as heightened awareness) until it becomes second nature.

Some people are inherently paranoid and, while we may joke about paranoia, being suspicious has allowed more than one person to survive situations where those less skeptical — less paranoid — didn't.

This doesn't mean you should walk around like a bundle of raw nerves, jumping at the smallest sound. Quite the opposite. Carry yourself in a manner that shows you are alert to your surroundings at all times. Carry yourself so that anyone sizing you up for attack will *see* you are aware of your surroundings. True vigilance translates into an air of confidence obvious to any potential predator, prompting them to look for weaker, less alert, prey.

Still, you can't always count on vigilance alone to dissuade attackers. This leaves you with two options: a non-violent or a violent response to a threat.

In a perfect world we would deal with all affronts to our person using *non-violent* means, since there is less danger to us, and much less legal repercussions.

Unfortunately, circumstances conspire and times arise when we must dole out violence tit-for-tat, blow for blow.

Fact: some individuals are neither physically nor mentally prepared to deal with violent confrontations. These people must therefore either resort to servitude, subterfuge, or must radically reorganize their lives so as to be better able to deal with future threats (provided, that is, they survive the immediate threat!).

Other individuals, those not in the primary "violence-prone" category, may decide it is worth the danger, the time in The Hole (solitary confinement), and the risk of additional time being added to their sentence, in order to strike so violently at an enemy so as to discourage other wolves from poking their noses around the cell door.

If you kill an enemy secretly, that is all the better since you will not have to suffer the consequences — Hole time — and further prosecution.

On the other hand, killing an enemy in front of 500 witnesses in the prison chow hall sends a clear message to others that you are not to be trifled with.

The options are yours.

Only you can decide which option fits your particular circumstance, resources, and mind set.

The thing to remember is, while *you* are considering which option to use against your foe... he will be weighing *his* own options!

## **Chapter Two**

### **Non-Violent Self-Defense**

As the saying goes, "any port in a storm." For the beleaguered inmate who lacks the taste for violence, any ploy or strategy that keeps prison predators at bay is likely to be exploited.

Some inmates take what they think is the easy way out by finding themselves a prison "husband" to fight their battles for them. Only too soon they discover they have a lot more to swallow than just their pride... but that's a whole other can of worms.

Barring your allowing some prison vulture taking you under his wing, there are several non-violent ways to strike at another prisoner without having to actually engage him in physical combat. These methods include:

- Psychological Warfare,
- Snitching,
- Planting, and
- Getting a Dog to Eat a Dog.



As a citizen of the Steel Nation, you need to make yourself aware of these methods not only on the chance you might need to use them yourself but, more importantly, so as to prevent these tricks and techniques being employed against you.

## Psychological Warfare

The Steel National adage that "there are two kinds of people you don't want to mess with: The Bad and The Crazy" takes into account that some prisoners successfully use *fear* and *superstition* instead of brute force for self-defense.

### *Fear* (The Bad)

"The Bad" are those prisoners who "take care of business" by standing up for themselves. They are ready at a moment's notice to crack the head of anyone who looks at them wrong or too long.

It has been said that "reputation spills less blood." This especially holds true in the Steel Nation.

Having a reputation for ready violence — while not winning you any friends — acts as a defensive barrier to other predators seeking easier prey. How you initially acquire this "reputation" is another matter.

If at some point during your prison "bit" you cut someone's head off, there is a pretty good chance most other prisoners will steer clear of targeting you.

Inmates also tend to stay clear of prisoners convicted of heinous crimes such as gunning down eleven members of their family on Easter Sunday or poisoning 50-plus hospital patients. Cannibals are also usually left pretty much to themselves.

Of course, such a reputation can also produce the exact opposite effect, some Steel Nation "wannabe" may try to get a

reputation for being a killer by killing someone who already has such a reputation.

### *Superstition* (The Crazy)

Some prisoners stake a more passive approach to self-defense and feign mental illness in order to be left unmolested.

This tactic can be both effective and dangerous.

Prisoners for the most part are undereducated and this lack of education often lends itself to irrational fear and superstition of things foreign or not easily understood. As a result, inmates have an almost superstitious fear of "bug outs" and tend to give them a wide berth. After all, who wants to wrestle with an inmate who has feces spread over his body from head to toe!

On the other hand, feigning mental illness can be dangerous. Such an act could easily put you under the thumb of the prison's psych department (who always seem to have some experimental mind-numbing drug they are just dying to test).

Other prisoners successfully manipulate the superstitions of fellow prisoners by cultivating rumors and reputations of the manipulator being a witch, voodoo priest, or Satanist, possessed of the "Evil Eye."

While this might sound far-fetched if you grew up going to a nice white painted church once a week, you should note that the complexion of the Steel Nation has changed considerably over the past couple of decades due to the fact that many of those landing on our shores have subsequently landed in prison. Many of these new arrivals hold animistic beliefs in spirits and guardian angels, devils and demons that seem to lend themselves to manipulation.

(Come to think of it, maybe these inmate's animistic beliefs *aren't* that far removed from those inmates who are easy

recruits for radical fundamentalist Christian cults and Muslim sects!)

## Snitching

As mentioned earlier in the section on the Fatal Eight, informants occupy the lowest rung within the Steel Nation hierarchy.

Still, the fact remains that the most common Steel Nation method for dealing non-violently with an adversary is simply to tell on him.

According to one grizzled Steel Nation veteran, when you tell on someone for something they are actually doing, that's *snitching*. When you tell on someone for something they aren't really doing — in other words, when you say Joe is selling drugs out of this cell when he really isn't — that's *lying*.

*Snitching* is a no-no.

*Lying* is acceptable Steel Nation *strategy*!

Dropping a "snitch-kite" saying that Joe is threatening to kill someone (or that Joe is himself the target of a death threat) is all it takes to get Joe removed from the general prison population, and moved into either The Hole or into forced Protective Custody.

The *anonymous* kite might contain information ranging from your enemy is dealing drugs to that he has a knife in his cell, anything to cause him grief.

Anonymous kites have been responsible for putting more prisoners into The Hole "pending investigation" than any other cause. At the very least, an inmate who has a snitch-kite sent in on him falls under suspicion and closer scrutiny from the prison administration. His being under closer scrutiny might cause him to take some of *his* heat off *you*.

## Planting

Prisoners are responsible for any contraband found on their person, in their cells, or in their general work area, whether *they* put the contraband there or not. Prisoners are also held responsible for any contraband found in packages of food or sundry goods sent to them from friends or family.

Just as it is easy for one prisoner to plant drugs or a weapon in another prisoner's jacket or cell, it is also a simple matter to have an accomplice outside prison "hide" drugs in the toe of a pair of shoes mailed to the targeted inmate. All packages are thoroughly searched as they enter the prison, so the "hidden" contraband will be discovered and the targeted inmate thrown in The Hole and perhaps subsequently be transferred to a higher (more strict) security institution.

## Getting a Dog to Eat a Dog

"Getting a dog to eat a dog" involves getting someone of great ferocity or cunning to remove your enemy for you. The simplest version of this ploy is hiring an assassin to kill your enemy.

Steel Nation hit men are easy to come by, and run the gamut from "wannabes" trying to establish reputations to professional, cold-hearted killers.

The right sum can buy anything from a black eye to a bodybag. Rates are usually reasonable; \$200 or a couple of bags of marijuana go a long way in the Steel Nation.

In lieu of hiring a hit man, you can rent a bodyguard, or — for a monthly fee — contract protection from an organized gang.

Unfortunately, once word gets around that you are incapable of taking care of business firsthand, that you need to hire



someone to do your dirty work, other Steel Nation predators may decide to test your resolve as soon as your protection/bodyguard is no longer around.

A final word of warning: The pedigreed guard dog you buy today might be the mongrel that bites your hand off tomorrow. Who knows your weaknesses better than the one you hire to help hide them?

A crafty variation of "Get a dog to eat a dog" bears mentioning.

First, obtain the name and address of the wife, sister, girlfriend, or mother of a "tush-hog" — a very dangerous prisoner. Then type (no handwriting to trace!) a very vulgar letter to the woman, using the name of your enemy. Upon receiving the letter, the insulted woman will immediately tell her imprisoned brother, son, husband, or boyfriend. The pissed-off prisoner will then go gunning for the inmate he believes responsible for the offending letter.

In the event you can't get another prisoner to do your dirty work for you, you can enlist the help of unsuspecting prison staff.

Have a street accomplice anonymously contact a prison staff member and threaten them if they don't treat so-and-so (your enemy) better. The staff reports the threat to their superiors and your enemy disappears to The Hole or to another prison.

A simpler variation of this has an outside accomplice mailing contraband to the staff member along with a note indicating that the contraband is meant to be passed on to your enemy.

Administration investigators will assume that the contraband was accidentally routed to the wrong staff member. Either way, your enemy will disappear from the regular prison population.

Many prisoners use one or more of these non-violent ploys to deal with detractors, in the same way variations of these ploys are played out on the street.

Familiarize yourself with all the non-violent tricks and techniques you might run into while in the Steel Nation, if only in order to protect yourself from falling prey to them.

## Chapter Three Violent Self-Defense

By and large, violence is the tried and true method used to settle disputes inside the borders of the Steel Nation. Violence is an expedient way of doing business in prison as well as a major distraction and sport.

Ideally, all disputes could be settled "out of court" and off the Steel Nation killing ground... but that's just not the way things are done in prison.

Violence, in general, is an ugly thing to witness and violence within the unforgiving confines of the Steel Nation is an even uglier aberration given the crude weapons often used.

In 1980, half the prison population at the Kentucky State Prison at Eddyville watched as two brothers repeatedly stabbed another inmate for upwards of fifteen minutes with homemade "shanks." Even after two correctional officers arrived on the scene, the enraged brothers refused to stop. In fact, one brother continued to carve on the downed, barely battling, inmate while the second brother *negotiated* with the



arriving officers. The two brothers finally surrendered, but only after being threatened with gunfire from a nearby gun tower, and not before one of the brothers concluded the assault by slamming the now semi-conscious victim with a rock twice the size and weight of a bowling ball! In total, the victim received 54 stab wounds, requiring stitches, but lived!

Ironically, the assaulted inmate was released from the prison infirmary *before* one of his attackers who, during the frenzy of the assault, inadvertently cut the tendons in his own hands with the crude prison knife he had used.

But knives, while one of the mainstays of prisoner weaponry, are by no means the only weapon you can count on having to defend against — or use — during your stay at the Steel Nation sojourn.

Just as you can never be certain who will attack you or when or where they will attack, neither can you be certain what Death will be armed with when he comes calling at your cell door. What you *can* be certain of is that he will not “half-step,” he will want to finish you with the first, last, and *only* strike he may get. If he is smart, he — your enemy — will not give you a chance to do the same thing to him at a later date.

While in the Steel Nation — whether as prisoner, guard, administrator, or visitor — you can, at any time, be attacked by blade, bludgeon, bomb, or any number of other weapons.

If you are an employee of a maximum-security prison, you are subject to being attacked, held hostage, raped, tortured, or killed at any given moment of your eight-hour shift.

If you are a “front line” guard — they like to be called “Correctional Officers” nowadays — you might be called upon at any moment of your shift to physically intervene between warring prisoners or between a prisoner and one of your fellow staff members. Joining the fray, you will have no idea what kind of inmate weapon you might find yourself having to contend with.

Prisoners must literally *live* — or die — with these same concerns, not for eight hours a day, but for “24-7.” If you are a prisoner, you might be attacked by your cell partner and murdered in your sleep. As a prisoner, you could be given an official-looking movement-pass instructing you to come to a certain place at a specific time. Arriving, you suddenly find yourself trapped by several rapists and/or killers. Or, you might find yourself in The Riot and be forced to defend yourself by using violence.

Remember the Steel Nation adage that “There are two kinds of people you want to avoid while in prison: The Bad and The Crazy.” Unfortunately, those two designations are broad enough to encompass 90% of all the prisoners you run into!

Bottom line: Somewhere along the line during your Steel Nation stay — whether as Kept or Keeper — you will either be attacked with violence or will feel the need to resort to violence yourself.

If you must do violence, remember the first rule of Steel Nation combat: *Do Efficient Violence!* Do “efficient” violence by studying how other prisoners hide and/or disguise both their weapons *and* their intent to do bodily harm.

## Unarmed Self-Defense

The longer you can hold your attacker(s) at bay, the better your chances of being saved by the arrival of Correctional Officers.

However, you’d be a fool to count on others for your protection. It is highly unlikely a guard will intervene between one inmate and another if they (the guards) think they will be injured or killed. To give credit where credit is due, however, there are incidents where guards have stepped between an attacker and a downed victim. But, as with police on the street,

even if help does come, there is no guarantee it will arrive in time.

Likewise, you can be surrounded by friends, associates, and fellow gang members, but that is still no guarantee your "road-dogs" will come to your rescue if you are attacked. Even the best of friends freeze; the best partners panic. This is not to say that true camaraderie does not exist among some prisoners, only that you shouldn't gamble your life on anyone but yourself.

Confronted by an attacker, your best bet is to *run*. This is always your first option. Unfortunately, there is usually very little space to run in order to avoid an attacker in prison.

During the summer of 1994, one inmate at the Ohio State Reformatory at Mansfield solved this problem of where to run. Chased by several knife-wielding attackers, the inmate scurried up the prison's barbed wire topped fence and hung there patiently for several minutes until alarmed guards finally arrived.

Of course, if an enemy is determined to kill you, you will never see him coming. Attacking from behind is the rule in the Steel Nation.

When initially approached by an attacker, first try to put *distance*, and then, *obstacles* between the two of you. The more space kept between you and an attacker, the safer for you. Danger increases with proximity.

If you can't run, compensate by shoving chairs, trashcans, or other obstacles between you and your attacker.

Keep your back to a wall as much as possible. Never allow room for a *second* attacker to get behind you.

If you're unable to flee when faced with two attackers equal distances from you, take the fight to one attacker. Your only chance is to disable the first attacker *before* the second attacker closes in. As you step toward one attacker, you put precious distance between you and the second attacker.

When fighting off an attacker use the following four tactics:

Pre-emptive Action,  
Distractions,  
Yelling, and  
Kicking.

### ***Pre-emptive Action***

If you *think* someone is about to attack you, *don't hesitate*, initiate either flight or fight. If you get a "feeling" that something is "wrong," trust your sixth sense. That's a few million years of evolution — Survival of the Fittest — trying to warn you! When it is a question of living or dying, the quick or the dead, *shoot first* and ask questions later.

### ***Distractions***

A cunning distraction is the first step in delivering a knockout "sucker-punch" or a devastating first — and only! — weapons strike. If you are a smoker, blow smoke into an enemy's eyes or flick the cigarette into his eyes. Spit tobacco juice or gum, throw a cup of coffee, dirt, or anything that might cause your enemy to flinch or blink, giving you a chance to flee, attack, or counter-attack.

### ***Yelling***

Yelling, especially "karate-sounding" words, serves four purposes.

First, yelling helps you break out of any initial paralysis you might experience when facing a deadly threat.

Second, yelling startles your opponent, perhaps confusing him as to whether or not you actually know martial arts. Any hesitation in your opponent is a plus for you.

Third, yelling forcefully — what karate people call “Kiai” — tenses abdominal muscles, helping you better withstand blows to the abdomen.

Finally, yelling helps attract attention and, possibly, help.

### ***Kicking***

Even if you’ve never formally studied martial arts, *kick* at an attacker. Kicking — even bad kicking — helps keep an attacker at a distance. Even someone whose punch carries no power can muster considerable force from their legs.

When fighting off a knife attack, it is better to take cuts to your shoe-protected feet and/or pants-covered legs than to your hands and arms.

If you don’t know how to box, or if you’ve never had any formal training in the martial arts, you are strongly encouraged to get such training.

No matter how deadly or how advanced a weapon is, it can be taken away from you. This is why some familiarity with basic *unarmed combat* is essential to the serious Steel Nation survivalist.

## **Anatomy and Targets**

Even if you do have a weapon, you still need the physical determination to overcome your fear and plunge that shank *repeatedly* into an enemy, who is also busy fighting for his life.

It also helps if you know where to *aim*. The more you know about the basic vulnerabilities of the human body, the better able you will be to strike an enemy while, at the same time, guarding yourself from attack. The more you know about how the human body is put together, the easier it is to take it apart.

How you “take apart” an opponent depends a great deal on whether he is facing you or has his back turned to you.

### ***Targeting the front of an opponent***

Most violent confrontations occur face-to-face. The majority of the areas you will target on an opponent are on the front of his body.

(a) *Ankles and Feet*. Wounding the ankles and/or feet of an attacker impedes his movement and prevents him from advancing. If the injury is serious enough, it will end the fight.

Learning to “sweep” an attacker’s feet out from under him is a *basic* unarmed combat skill.

Merely stepping on an attacker’s foot, pinning it, can impede his movement, holding him in place long enough for you to counter-attack. This tactic is a good one to use against a kicker.

In close-in combat, you can break an attacker’s foot by stomping on it.

As always, with any combat technique you might learn, be aware that an enemy may use the same trick *against you*!

(b) *Knees*. Even moderate pressure on the knee will cause the joint to “lock-out,” impeding an attacker’s forward momentum and preventing an attacker from continuing his advance.

Breaking an attacker’s knee with a well-placed kick or with a bludgeon will end a fight.

Knees are easy targets since most attackers will have their weight on their leading leg. Another reason the knee is a good target is because, being low, it is easy for even an inexperienced kicker to reach with a kick.

On the offense side, when closing with an attacker, *your* knees can be used as formidable weapons for striking into an opponent’s groin or into his thigh muscles.



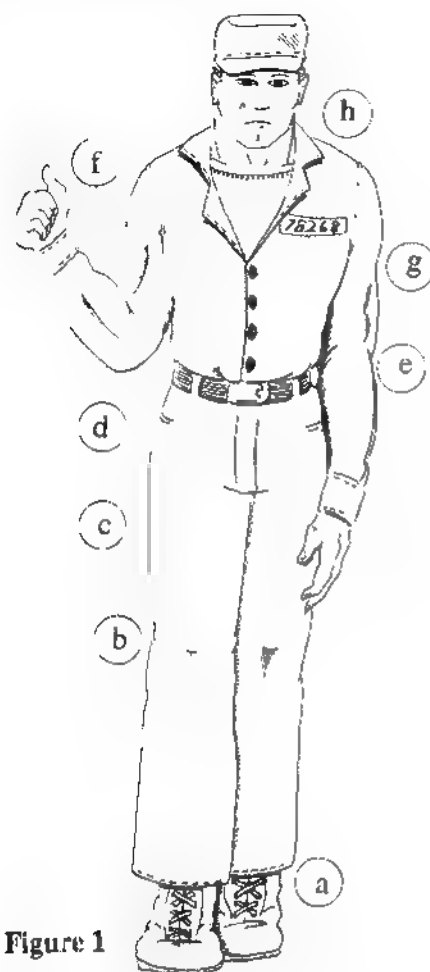


Figure 1

Targeting the front of an opponent

Knee strikes into an attacker's stomach, sides, and ribs can knock the breath from him. Grasping your attacker's hair, force his head down into a devastating strike to his face from your rising knee

(c) *Groin*. This is a much over-rated target as far as unarmed combat is concerned. Any fighter worth his salt guards "the family jewels" religiously.

However, when targeting an attacker's groin, a miss is often as good as a hit. That's because any kick or strike, even a feigned strike toward an attacker's groin can elicit a "flinch reaction," stopping his forward momentum and/or causing him to drop his hands in order to block your real or feigned blow.

For defensive purposes, block kicks to your own groin by raising your leg rather than by dropping your hands. The martial arts rule is: If it's above your waist, block it with your hands; if it's below your waist, block it by raising your leg.

Seizing a firm grip on an attacker's genitals, even if he is wearing clothing, can elicit a "freeze reaction" from the grabee, causing him to temporarily go stiff.

The groin is also an excellent target for stabbing into with a knife or a spear. A deep cut into the groin/inside leg area can sever an artery and result in an attacker bleeding to death (See The Appendix).

Don't forget that an opponent's groin can just as easily be targeted from behind.

(d) *Abdomen*. This is a favorite target for knife- or spear-wielding attackers coming at you from the front. A belly wound to the stomach, liver, or intestines, while not instantaneously fatal, can kill a prisoner through fear. A wounded prisoner can die of two types of *shock*. The first is *physiological* "clinical shock", due to blood loss.

The second is fear ("panic shock") where the wounded person's panicked actions result in more blood loss — hastening the onset of "clinical shock."

This second type of shock/fear is worsened by the *psychological* impact (mental trauma) of seeing your blood and guts spill out on the floor!

If you are ever the victim of a knife attack to the abdomen and the attacker leaves the knife or spear embedded in your body, *don't pull it out* since, left in, it helps to stem blood flow.

(e) *Elbow*. Every time an attacker extends his arm, whether in a punch, stabbing with a blade, or swinging a bludgeon, he exposes his elbow to counter-attack. Like a leg without a knee, an arm without an elbow is not much of a threat.

A solid strike with a fist or the palm of your hand, a solid kick, or a counter-strike with your own bludgeon, can all shatter an attacker's elbow.

The great Japanese swordsman Miyamoto Musashi, author of *The Book of Five Rings*, called this strategy of striking at non-lethal but nonetheless debilitating targets "Cutting at the edges," a strategy used to wear down and wound an opponent in order to weaken him for the *coup de grace*.

This is similar to the military practice of either sending in human sappers and/or lobbing in a heavy artillery barrage in preparation for a troop landing.

Following this same principle, western knife-fighters, when unable to obtain a straight killing thrust, wound the arms and legs of a victim — whittle them down — knowing that loss of blood and subsequent shock to the victim's body will soften him up.

On the offensive side, your own elbows make excellent close-in weapons. When in grappling combat, swing your elbow inwards to strike an opponent's temple, jaw, or the front of his throat; or, use your rising elbow like an uppercut to target the underside of his chin.

(f) *Hand and Wrist*. This is another great "Cutting at the edges" target. While not a killing target per se, any time you can cripple an attacker's fingers, hand, or wrist, the harder it will be for him to continue his assault.

(g) *Solar Plexus*. This is the area where the rib cage comes together at the center of the chest. A solid hand blow, kick or bludgeon strike to this area can knock the wind out of an attacker.

When attacking with a knife or a spear into the front of an enemy, stab in *and up* into this area in order to penetrate the heart and lungs.

(h) *Clavicle*. The collarbone is a favored area for overhand knife attackers. A knife-wielder sporting the Inside Grip (See section on *Bladed Weapons*) stabs down into this area between the upper chest and the neck. A strike severing the veins and arteries running under the protective collarbone causes unconsciousness within seconds and death within minutes.

### ***Targeting the Head and Throat***

Kill the head and the body dies. Any determined blow to the head, throat, or neck of an attacker can end his attack.

(a) *Temple*. This is a hard target to hit due to the fact that experienced fighters know to bob and weave their heads, making it a difficult target for anyone except a trained boxer or martial artist to hit with a long arm strike. The temple does present itself to elbow blows during close-in grappling.

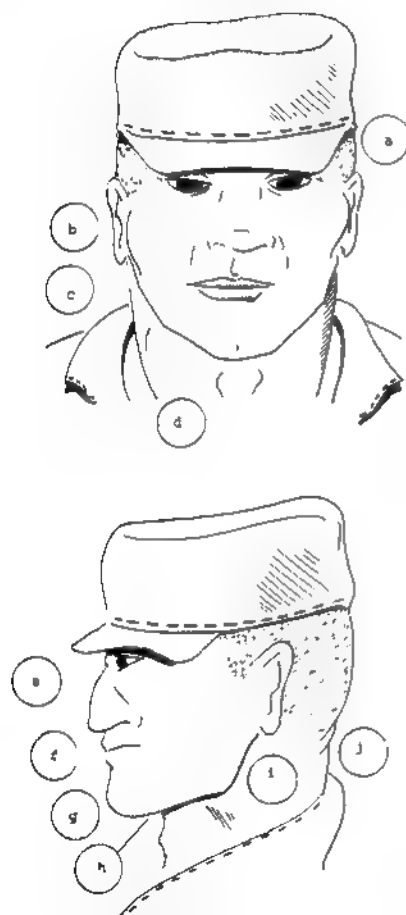
Any heavy bludgeon blow to the temple can cause unconsciousness and/or death. This area can also be targeted with knives, ice picks and other stabbing objects.

(b) *Ear*. The ear is the center of balance. Any heavy blow to the ear from a fist, cupped hand, or bludgeon will succeed in upsetting an opponent's balance, knocking him down and possibly out.

Though difficult to target, stabbing into the ear with any long, penetrating weapon can cause pain, unconsciousness, or death, depending upon the depth of penetration.

(c) *Side of Neck*. Given all the veins and arteries that course along the side of the neck, it is no wonder that this area is the number one target for a Steel Nation knife attack. In fact, any strong hand or bludgeon blow to this area can cause pain, unconsciousness, or death. Even moderate hand and bludgeon

blows to the neck area can cause pain, muscle cramping, and can interfere with an attacker's ability to continue his assault.



**Figure 2**  
Targeting the head and throat

(d) *Throat.* A blow to the front of the throat can *kill*. It takes only a little pressure to the throat to crush the larynx (situated where the chin meets the neck). A crushed larynx blocks the

trachea, causing choking, unconsciousness, and death by asphyxiation.

Blows to the throat can be made either by hand or with a bludgeon. This area can also be penetrated by any stiff and/or pointed weapon.

In unarmed combat, a preliminary move to attacking the throat is to uppercut the chin with the palm of the hand. This, in turn, exposes the throat to a killing blow.

The throat is also, of course, a target for strangulation attacks (see section on *Strangulation*).

(e) *Eyes.* Any motion toward an attacker's eyes causes a "flinch reaction."

Any irritating or caustic substance (dirt, bleach, etc.) can be used as a weapon to target the eyes.

Any solid object thrust into an attacker's eyes (fingers, sticks, pens, etc.) can cause pain, varying degrees of temporary or permanent blindness and, if penetration is deep enough, death.

(f) *Nose.* The nose is a much-neglected target. Inexperienced fighters think of it only as a focus for punching into the face. Experienced Steel Nation survivors view the nose as the doorway to soft, sensitive sinus tissue and to the death-sensitive brain.

Any solid blow to the nose from the hand or from a bludgeon can cause pain, blurring eyes, difficulty breathing, bleeding, and unconsciousness.

Striking up into the nostrils with stiff fingers, sticks, pens, etc., will elicit pain, watering eyes, difficulty breathing, bleeding and, if penetration is deep enough, death.

(g) *Mouth.* A solid strike to the mouth with a hand blow or bludgeon can cause pain, choking (due to blood and broken teeth blocking the throat), and unconsciousness.



Jamming any object or substance (dirt, stick, etc.) into an attacker's mouth can induce choking and difficulty in breathing.

Your teeth are one of your best offensive weapons when you have to fight close with an attacker. Biting an opponent *anywhere* (lips, nose, neck, fingers) can be sufficiently painful to induce him to break off his assault.

(h) *Under the chin.* Jabbing *anything* stiff (fingers, pencils, etc.) up into the soft under part of an attacker's chin can cause pain, and can induce an attacker to choke to death by "swallowing his tongue."

A deep enough thrust into this area with a blade or even a pencil can penetrate to the lower brain, killing an attacker instantly.

(i) *Under the ear.* A hard knuckle or bludgeon blow into this area can stun or kill, depending on the amount of force. Attacking this area with a stabbing weapon is a *kill shot*.

(j) *Base of the skull.* Any strong hand strike or bludgeon blow to the base of the skull can stun or kill, depending on the amount of force used.

Stabbing into this target with a pointed weapon is a favorite with commando-type attacks from the rear, second in popularity as a target choice only to the kidneys.

### Targeting from the rear

Attacking a victim from behind is standard operating procedure for Steel Nation veterans (after all, how do you think they survived to be Steel Nation "veterans!").

Forget John Wayne and the Code of the West. In the Steel Nation, Death is Death... no matter what direction it comes from!

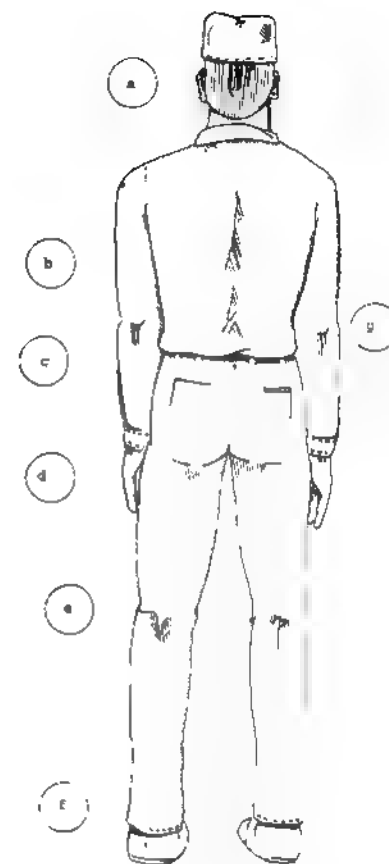


Figure 3  
Targeting the rear of an opponent

(a) *Seventh Vertebra (Between the shoulder blades).* This is a good area to attack with a heavy bludgeon or with a downward stabbing weapon.

Strikes to this area directly assault the spinal column and the juncture of nerves between the shoulder blades.

A heavy blow to this area can stun or render a victim unconscious. A heavy blow will do irreparable damage to the spinal column (back bone). A blade thrust into this spot can

elicit, first, a "freeze reaction" from the initial shock to the nervous system and, then, death.

(b) *Armpits.* There is a large cluster of nerves situated in the armpit. Hooking your hand and grabbing into this muscle/nerve bunch during a close-in fight can paralyze an opponent's arm.

Stabbing up into the armpit with a pointed weapon can cause excruciating pain to an attacker and end his ability to continue his assault.

(c) *Kidneys.* Situated midway down the back of both sides, the kidneys are the primary targets for a stabbing attack from the rear.

Knowledgeable assassins stab up and into this area, tilting and twisting the blade before pulling it out. Initial shock causes the victim to freeze, allowing the attacker to stab his victim repeatedly. Even if the first thrust does not kill instantly, the shock will render a victim unconscious.

A solid blow to the kidneys from a bludgeon or a solid hand strike can cause pain, internal bleeding, unconsciousness and, depending on the force of the blow, death.

Prisoners anticipating a stabbing attack wear thick overcoats and tape magazine "armor" around their midsections under their clothing.

(d) *Anal cleft and tail bone.* A victim can be attacked with several unarmed blows and kicks from this rear angle.

By striking up into the victim's groin from behind with an open hand, then grabbing a handful of groin and pulling back sharply on the victim's groin while simultaneously striking the back of his head, you can easily slam a victim forward to the ground.

Kicking up between the opponent's legs from behind — striking the tail bone and/or groin area — can have the same debilitating effect as kicking into his groin from the front.

Stabbing up into the anal cleft/anus with any pointed object can cause a "freeze reaction," excruciating pain, internal bleeding, and eventually death.

You can also stab up into the groin area from this rear angle. (Now you see why protective athletic cups are standard equipment to wear to any ass-kickin' contest!)

(e) *Back of the knee.* Attacking from behind, stomp into the back of the knee in order to force an opponent to the ground. A powerful enough strike, either with a stomping foot or with a heavy bludgeon, can permanently damage the tendons and muscles at the back of the knee, impeding your opponent's ability to continue to fight.

(f) *Achilles Tendon.* The tendons at the back of the foot control the toes, which in turn, affect balance. A sharp kick to the Achilles Tendon can sweep an attacker to the ground.

Damaging the Achilles Tendon, with a strong kick-sweep or with a low sweeping bludgeon strike, causes pain and impedes an enemy's ability to continue a fight.

(g) *Spine.* Stabbing into (with pointed weapons) or striking forcefully (with heavy bludgeons) anywhere along the spine can cause immediate pain, temporary or permanent paralysis, unconsciousness, and death.

Remember: The more you know about how the human body is put together, the easier it will be to take it apart should the need arise. More importantly, the more you know about anatomy in general, the easier it will be to guard *your* own anatomy in particular!

## The Prisoner's Hidden Arsenal

When a prisoner suspects he might be attacked or when he himself feels the necessity to attack another person, he must carry weapons on his person.

Given the fact prisoners may be strip-searched by guards at any time, Steel Nation veterans have become very adept over the years at hiding weapons on their person. As a result, anything a prisoner wears or carries can be used as a defensive tool or offensive weapon.

Anything a prisoner can slip into his jacket pocket — a rock, a sharp stick, or a handful of dirt — can be used against you.

Speaking of "blindners" (dirt, sand, etc.), prisoners often carry pepper or some other irritant dust in their pockets for blinding attackers or victims.

Not only can a prisoner successfully hide a multitude of weapons in his pockets and under his clothing, but *the clothing itself* can also be used as a weapon.

For example, a prisoner's jacket can be thrown over your head as a prelude to his attacking you with a knife.

In the hands of an experienced Steel Nation survivalist even a simple handkerchief can be deadly. (See section on *Bludgeons*.)

(1) *Caps.* Small weapons (razors, etc.) and other contraband can be hidden under, or in the lining of a hat or cap.

A common Steel Nation ploy is to sew razor blades into the brim or lining of a baseball cap. (See section on *Bladed Weapons*.)

Defensively, a prisoner can use his cap as a hand-guard against a knife/razor blade attack. A cap can also be shoved into an attacker's face to startle him or temporarily restrict his vision.



**Figure 4**  
Prisoner's hidden arsenal



(2) *Magazines*. What looks like an innocuous rolled-up magazine can turn out to be anything from a pair of mushfake nunchakus ("numb-chucks") to a homemade shotgun. (See section on *Bludgeons*.)

(3) *Belt*. A belt can be used as a bludgeon when swung with the buckle foremost. Securing a heavy lock to the belt makes an excellent "soap-on-a-rope." (See section on *Bludgeons*.)

Belts can be snapped like a rattail towel into the face of an attacker to startle and/or blind.

Belts can also be used to strangle a victim. (See section on *Strangulation*.)

(4) *Armor*. Inmates often tape magazine "armor" around their midsections and/or around their forearms as protection against a knife attack. Often such armor is augmented with protruding spikes to discourage grabbing.

Inmates anticipating an attack also wrap their knees and elbows with Ace athletic bandages or cover them with sports knee and elbow pads. These pads are then augmented with spikes (nails, pieces of glass, etc.). Since these augmented pads are worn under clothing, an enemy will not suspect the protruding spike-weapons until you slam an elbow or a knee strike into him.

(5) *Shoes*. Steel Nation slang for a homemade knife, "shank," derives from the "shank" of metal reinforcing the soles in the old fashioned brogans once issued to prisoners. Inmates know heavy, preferably steel-toed, shoes are best for kicking and for stomping a downed opponent to death. Heavy shoes can also be taken off for use as a bludgeon.

However, other types of shoes also have their uses. Tennis shoes are better for running away and are more easily slipped off the foot when a hand covering is needed for fighting off a knife attacker. Shoes with cleats are great for striking into an attacker's face. Shoes can be swung by their strings into an attacker's face to startle him. Prisoners often affix spikes or

razor blades to their shoes to help augment their kicking effectiveness.

(6) *Gloves*. Spikes can be fixed into the backs of gloves to augment punching, and razor blades can be sewn into the fingers for grabbing onto a victim's throat (See section on *Bladed Weapons*).

## Weapons in a Typical Cell

Whether in an ancient dilapidated prison or a modern "correctional facility," a cell is still a cell. Yet within this typically small 7' x 11' area there are potentially dozens of places for prisoners to hide weapons as well as a myriad of environmental weapons a prisoner can glean from the cell itself.

(1) *Bed*. Some prisons have beds that are little more than poured concrete or slabs of steel in order to discourage inmates from taking their beds apart and turning them into deadly weapons. Other prison beds are securely bolted to the floor.

The majority of space in any prison cell is taken up by the bed. Inmates can use various parts of their beds to hide weapons in and/or can use parts of the bed itself to manufacture weapons.

Shanks and other contraband can be hidden inside a bed's hollow frame. Pieces of the frame itself can be peeled away and fashioned into a blade.

One Steel Nation favorite is to turn bedsprings into "ice picks" (see section on *Bladed Weapons*).

In the case of The Riot or other attempts by your enemies at invading your cell, a moveable bed can help block the cell door.

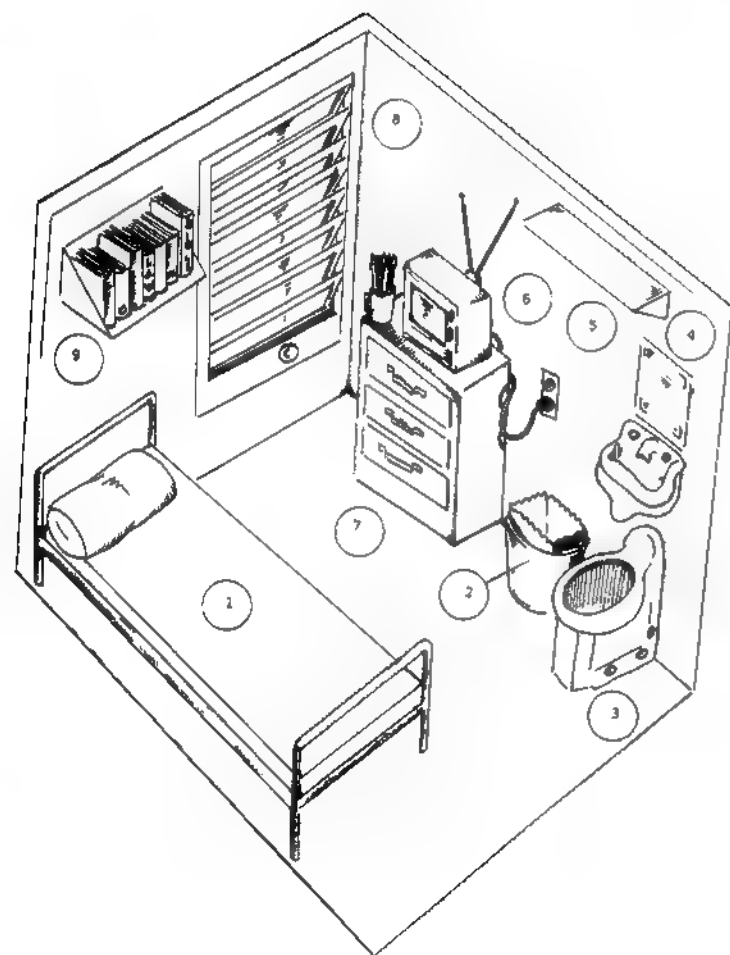


Figure 5  
Weapons in a typical cell

One ploy used by prisoners to dispose of an undesirable cellmate is to kill the cellmate by slamming his head into the

concrete floor or break his neck and then claim their cellmate had a seizure and fell out of the top bunk.

When living in an open-front (barred) cell, care must be taken to never sleep with your head toward the bars making it easy for an enemy to spear or strangle you through the bars.

Shanks and other weapons can be hidden inside mattresses or pillows.

A pillowcase can be filled with heavy cans or rocks and swung as a bludgeon.

Sheets and blankets can be thrown over an enemy's head in order to temporarily blind him, allowing you enough time to flee or counter-attack.

Note: When returning to your cell, always check *under the bed* to insure that an attacker is not hiding there.

(2) *Trashcan*. A simple trashcan can hide a dozen weapons. The can itself can be thrown at an attacker to elicit a flinch reaction.

Filled with rocks or some other heavy objects, a trashcan can be dropped from an upper-tier walkway onto the enemy below.

A paper sack or plastic bag liner can be set afire and thrown on an enemy. Plastic trash bag liners, once set afire, melt and stick to an enemy like taffy.

Many seemingly innocuous objects can be left laying in a trashcan, everyday objects all too easily passed over by guards during a search of a cell. One example: an innocent-looking tin can lid left laying in the trashcan can prove quite deadly in the hands of a prisoner who knows how to use it. (See section on *Bladed Weapons*.)

(3) *Toilets.* The toilet is an excellent place to hide weapons and other contraband. Inmates often hide knives, drugs, or contraband cash wrapped in plastic either up under the rim of the toilet bowl or in the toilet drain after securing the plastic bag to the drain with a hook.

Water, urine, and feces from your toilet can be used as temporary blinders.

In extreme cases, such as The Riot, a broken toilet or sink provides shards of porcelain that make an excellent stabbing weapon. Other broken sinks and toilets can provide you with pieces of bludgeon pipe.

This is one reason most modern institutions sport metal sinks, toilets and mirrors.

Care must always be taken when sitting on a cell toilet situated near the front of an open front cell, since an enemy could easily spear or garrote you through the bars. (See section on *Strangulation*.)

(4) *Sinks and Mirrors.* Scalding water from your sink makes an excellent weapon for a pre-emptive strike; when mixed with caustic substances, all the more so.

Any type of spray bottle or aerosol can be used as "mace."

Any slippery mixture of liquid soap or hand lotion can be spread just inside your cell door in order to unbalance uninvited "guests."

A metal mirror can be ripped from the wall and its sharp edges used as a weapon. Small, plastic mirrors sold in most prison commissaries can also be used to make shanks.

Since most prisons still enforce archaic grooming rules, prisoners are forced to shave regularly. As a result, inmates always have a ready supply of shaving products-cum-weapons on hand.

Grooming tools such as large afro-combs and pointed-handled brushes can be filed down for use as stabbing

weapons and/or can be used as cutting weapons when augmented with razor blades.

Razor blades, by themselves or when used to augment other tools or clothing, have many defensive-offensive uses. (See section on *Bladed Weapons*.)

Magic Shave brand depilatory favored by African-Americans, makes an extremely caustic blinder, especially when mixed with a carbonated drink. (See section on *Poisons*.)

Prison-manufactured soap is as hard as rock and makes an effective bludgeon when wrapped in a towel or when placed in a sock. (See section on *Bludgeons*.)

(5) *Light Fixtures.* Cell light fixtures can be used as both hiding places and as sources of weapons themselves. A broken light bulb can be shoved into an attacker's face to slash and blind. With modern fluorescent lighting, metal support strips can be torn out of the fixture and made into shanks.

Speaking of lighting, always beware of entering any dimly lit area (including your cell) where the dark might provide a hiding place for an enemy.

(6) *Appliances.* Appliances such as radios, tape players, and televisions can also either conceal weapons and/or can lend themselves to prisoner weapons manufacture.

Depending upon their thickness, rigid plastic appliance handles can be filed down for use as stabbing tools.

An appliance antenna can be used in the making of "zip guns." (See section on *Bombs and Guns*.) Antennas can also be used to strike into an enemy's eyes or, in the case of a flexible antenna, can be used to strangle. Round, UHF antennas are especially good for strangling (See section on *Strangulation*).

The batteries from a radio or tape player can be placed in a sock and used as a bludgeon.



Smaller appliances themselves can be swung by the cords as bludgeons. Electric cords from appliances can be used to strangle.

Electricity itself can be a deadly weapon. If you can arrange to hook your enemy up to a few amps — by running an electric wire to his cell door — he will no longer be a problem to you. Any current above .06 amps can cause severe shock, burned flesh, difficulty breathing, and death.

Harassed by three younger prisoners at the Lima Correctional Facility in Ohio, a weathered Steel Nation veteran liberally spread water all over the shower room floor and patiently awaited the arrival of his tormentors.

No sooner had the three bullies started their showers than the old con appeared around a corner holding two fray-ended electric wires. Touching the wires together, the veteran was rewarded with a spectacular arc of electric sparks and looks of horror from his three tormentors as it dawned on them exactly where they were standing.

Not surprisingly, those three bullies hung transfixed on every quiet word of warning the Steel Nation veteran explained to them about how good a conductor of electricity water was. Not surprisingly, they never again harassed the "crazy old coot."

Larger appliances such as a TV can be used to hide weapons. The screen of a television can be broken in an emergency and the glass used as an effective defensive-offensive stabbing weapon.

(7) *Metal Cabinets.* Any metal cabinets, chairs, doors, etc., can be used for making shanks. Metal can be peeled away from such cabinets and the handles can be removed from the drawers.

The metal drawers themselves can be used as bludgeons.

(8) *Windows.* Glass windows in cells can be broken and the shards used as weapons. Windows made of Plexiglas also

make excellent shanks. Neither glass nor Plexiglas set off metal detectors.

(9) *Bookshelves.* Shelves can also be a source of peeled metal. Small books can be thrown at an attacker to startle him. Larger books can be used as bludgeons or their sharp ends can be thrust into an attacker's eyes, throat, or solar plexus. Books also make excellent shields against a knife attack. Hollowed-out books can be used to hide weapons. Books can also be rigged to explode. (See section on *Bombs and Guns.*)

Even if you don't plan on spending the rest of your life inside a room roughly the size of a compact automobile, studying how prisoners successfully hide their contraband weapons in, and more importantly, glean weapons from, such sparse surroundings might help you — an honest citizen — better guard your own home and — still legal — weapons.

## Bladed Weapons

*"I think every inmate in Raiford (Florida State Prison) was well heeled. They all had knives. The place was a regular blood-bath. The only people who weren't armed were the guards."* (Constantino, 1979:59)

You can be cut, stabbed, or speared by a wide variety of shank weapons while in the Steel Nation, everything from a real butcher's knife stolen from the prison kitchen to razor blades sewn into the brim of an innocent-looking baseball cap.

For the purposes of this text, *Bladed Weapons* refers to any knife, any pointed tipped stabbing instrument, or any other myriad of cutting tools or weapons.

These include:

- *Pieces of wood* (mop, toilet brush handle, large artist's paint brushes) that can be sharpened and used to stab and kill. This includes any piece of metal, glass, bone, or plastic that can be affixed to the end of a broom, mop, etc., for use as a spear.
- *Pieces of metal* can be secretly sharpened in any of the prison's various metal-working sweatshops or can be filed down by rubbing against the concrete floor of a cell. Any stiff wire can be made into an "ice-pick."
- *Glass* (bottles, windows, etc.) can be broken and the shards used to cut the throats of the unsuspecting.
- *Plexiglas and Plastics* can also be used to make shanks that can easily pass through prison metal detectors. Even serrated-edged plastic knives can cut the soft flesh of the neck. Other plastics can be melted down to make formidable stabbing spikes.
- *Razor Blades* can be melted into the plastic handles of combs and brushes, sewn into the linings of hats and clothing, or simply handheld as lethal weapons.

These are only the main sources of bladed weapons in the Steel Nation. In the right (or is that "wrong?") hands, a pen, a pencil, or a tin can lid can kill.

At any given time while working or living in the Steel Nation, you might have to defend against a crazed shank-wielding assassin or, if Fate conspires and circumstances coalesce, you might find yourself wielding such a blade.

### ***Defending Against a Knife Attack***

A prisoner can wear a knife strapped to any part of his body: forearm, ankle, inside thigh (reached through his pants fly), or inside his belt under his shirt.

Prisoners tape knives to the center of their chest or between their shoulder blades, the most common areas overlooked by guards performing cursory "pat-down" searches.

Blades can also be hidden in a book that an inmate carries to school or the Bible he carries to chapel.

When faced with any blade-wielding attacker, keep as much distance as possible between him and yourself.

Second, always find a covering-shield for your defending hand. Ideally, this will be a shield that can both protect your hand as well as one that can be used as a weapon to strike your attacker (a jacket wrapped around your arm, a shoe slipped over your leading hand, a large book).

Never panic when an assailant comes to you with a shank. Practice your unarmed blocking of punches. If an attacker can't hit you with his fist, he can't hit you with a knife.

Neither should you become overly fearful in seeing an assailant with an unusually long shank since, the longer the blade, the harder it is for the attacker to wield it.

Knife attackers who lack confidence in their abilities and/or their resolve often opt for oversized blades in the hope the sight of a large blade will force their foe into submission.

Conversely, you must not become overconfident when an attacker comes at you with "only" a three-inch knife. Any vital organ in the body can be reached with a three-inch knife.

Remember the Steel Nation adage: if a man is trying to kill you, you will never see the knife until it is too late. The attacker who lets you see him coming with a knife is trying to scare you. Bad idea. The prisoner you *scare* today might be the same one that *kills* you tomorrow.

Prisoners determined to kill with one strike, attack from behind — striking into your neck and throat — and you'll never know what hit you. Even a glancing blade strike to the neck can prick an artery, causing you to bleed to death before

the notoriously indolent prison hospital staff comes to your aid (See the *Appendix*).

Prisoners determined to kill, tape their knives to their hands. This not only illustrates their determination but also prevents a victim from turning the tables by wresting the knife away from them.

How a prisoner attacks you with a bladed weapon depends on the type of bladed weapon he has. Some weapons lend themselves more readily to a particular attack: i.e., stabbing vs. cutting.

The type of blade a prisoner wields restricts how he attacks you, making it easier for you to defend against.

A prisoner wielding a regular edged *and* pointed-tipped knife can come at you with either a stabbing or a cutting attack.

Ice picks and spikes are stabbing weapons ill-suited for cutting.

Conversely, razors and other sharp-edged blades are poor for stabbing but excellent for a cutting-slashing attack.

Prisoners sporting a stabbing weapon, a sharp-pointed knife or an ice pick, must hold the weapon in either the *inside grip* or the *outside grip*.

**Inside Grip Attack and Defense.** An attacker employing the inside blade grip holds his weapon flush with his forearm. One major advantage of this inside grip is that it keeps the victim from seeing your weapon before you strike.



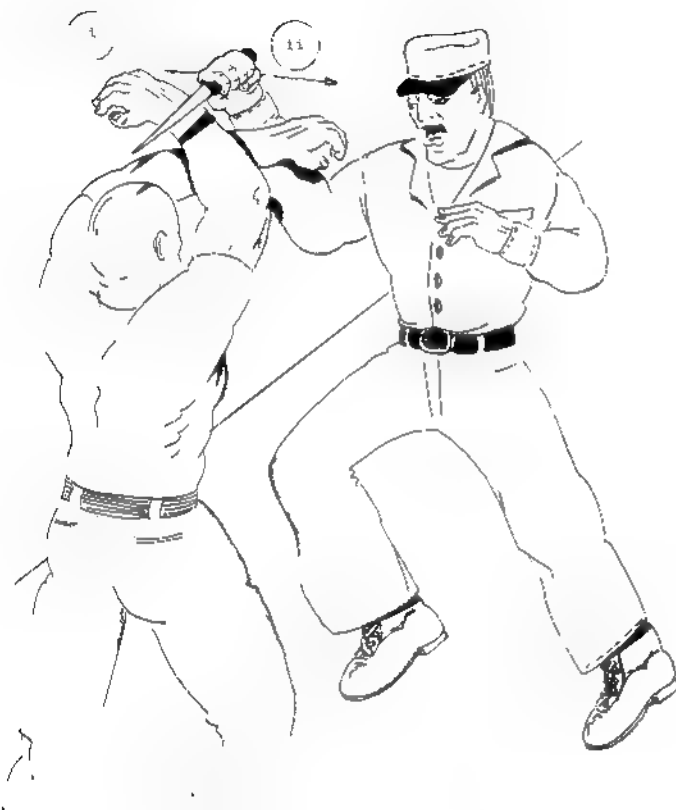
Figure 6  
Inside grip

An attacker using the inside grip generally attacks with an overhand, downward stabbing motions targeting the upper chest and neck from the front, and the neck and seventh vertebra area from the rear.

An overhand stabbing (or bludgeon) attack is countered by forming your hands into an "x-block" and by follow-up kicks.

An attacker using a double-edged blade and employing the inside grip can also slash back and forth horizontally (See Figures 11 and 12).

When fighting in general, and when fighting a blade-wielding attacker in particular, don't throw high kicks since high kicks (aimed at chest and head level) needlessly expose your inner leg and groin to attack.

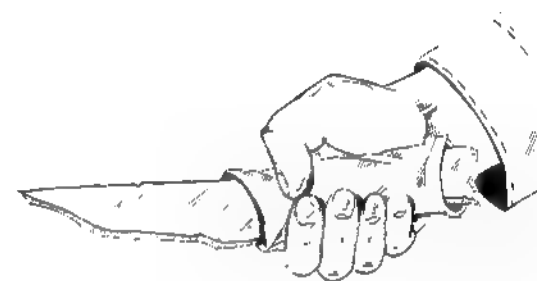


**Figure 7**

Defending against an overhead attack

- i. Employ the x-block to defend against an overhead attack
- ii. As the attacker impacts the x block, twist your hands, trapping the attacking hand
- iii. Follow-up with low-level kicks and sweeps

Objects such as a thick belt stretched taut, a stout stick, etc., can also be used as blockers.

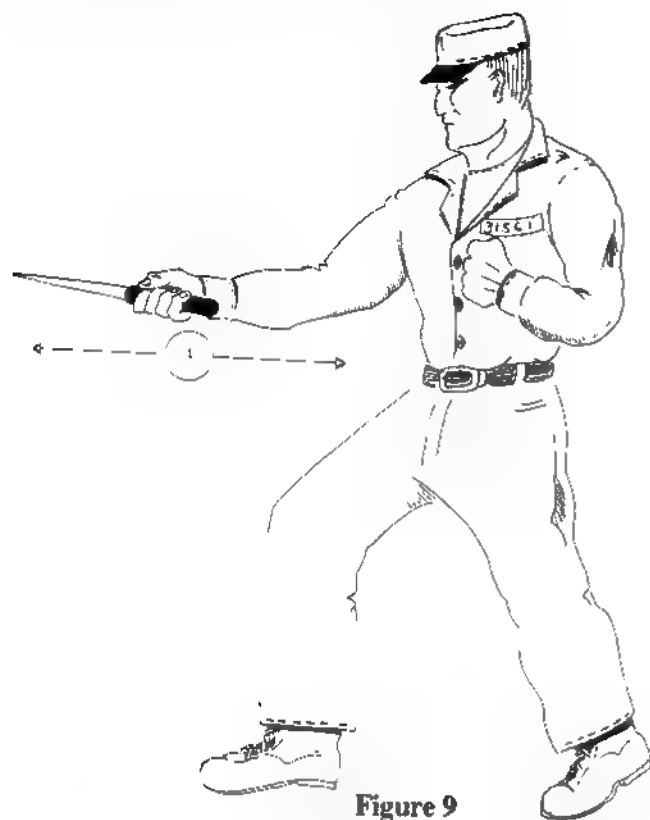


**Figure 8**  
Outside grip

*Outside Grip Attack and Defense.* An attacker employing the outside grip holds his weapon with the point towards his victim. This is the most common grip used in knife fighting.

An attacker using the outside grip attacks by swinging his blade back and forth on a horizontal plane in front of his body or by jabbing the blade in and out like a fencer.





**Figure 9**  
Stabbing attack/'jabber'

- i. In-out "jabbing" motion of attack

To defend against a "jabber," turn your body sideways (less of a target) and shift toward the outside of his knife-holding hand as it thrusts forward. Block with your rear hand, if possible, seize control of your attacker's thrusting arm while attacking into your attacker's face with your lead hand.



**Figure 10**  
Defense against a "jabber" stabbing attack

- i. Blocking
- ii. Counter-attack to face
- iii. Counter-attack with low-level kicks targeting the knee

When forced to defend against a "cutter" slashing back and forth, allow him to make a full swing inwards before closing with him. This will trap his weapon up against his body.



Figure 11  
"Cutter's" inside swing

Your second option for defending against a "cutter" is to close with him after he has swung his blade outward from his body. This permits you to get in close and counter-attack while the blade is furthest from you in its outward arc, when your attacker has exposed his "centerline" to attack.

The *centerline* is an imaginary straight line running from between a person's eyes to his groin.

For counter-attacking, most of your best combat targets are located along this line. Conversely, guard your own centerline religiously!

Accomplished knife wielders employing the outside grip with a double-edged knife can also cut up and slash down, as well as in a criss-cross diagonal pattern. Homemade Steel Nation shanks tend to have only one cutting edge. However, always be aware that knife-wielding attackers still have these lines of attack available to them.

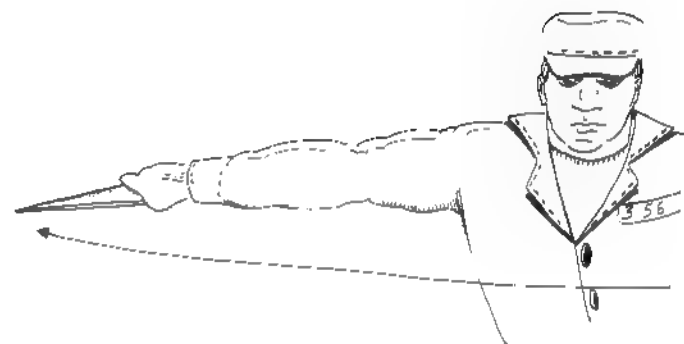


Figure 12  
"Cutter's" outside swing

These lines of attack can also be countered using the rear-hand block and the X-block (See Figures 7 and 10).

Any time you are forced to close with a knife-wielding attacker, be wary of his "empty" hand, or the hand not holding the weapon. An experienced fighter can use this empty hand to grab and pull a victim into his knife. Or, he can use this hand to punch you, stunning you until his blade can finish you off.

This "empty" hand can hide pepper and some other blinder.

This "empty" hand can also hold a *second knife*, held with an inside grip, flush with the forearm, unseen by you if you are too dazzled by the first knife. (See Figure 13.)



Figure 13  
"Shadowhand"/hidden weapon

### *Types of Blades Weapons*

In any type of combat, the type of defense you employ depends a great deal on the type of offense your enemy mounts.

Likewise, in the Steel Nation, the type of weapon your attacker wields will, to a great extent, determine your defense.

Luckily, despite the wide diversity of Steel Nation shanks, your attacker is still limited to using either the inside- or an outside-grip. This gives you — the defender — an edge since, depending on the weapon, you will automatically have an idea of your foe's line of attack.

*Stabbing Weapons.* Any pen or pencil — or sharp stick, for that matter — can be used for stabbing but the weapon must still be held in either an inside- or an outside-grip.

One exception to this is holding a sharp instrument between the fingers, like a "push-knife," for use in augmenting one's punching.

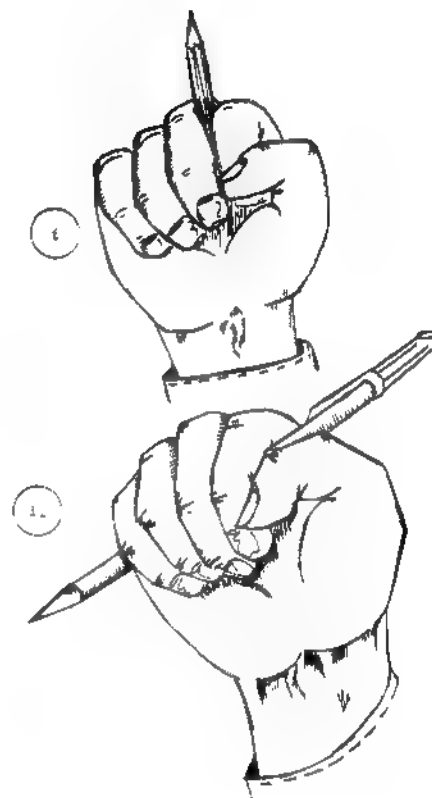


Figure 14  
Stabbing Weapons

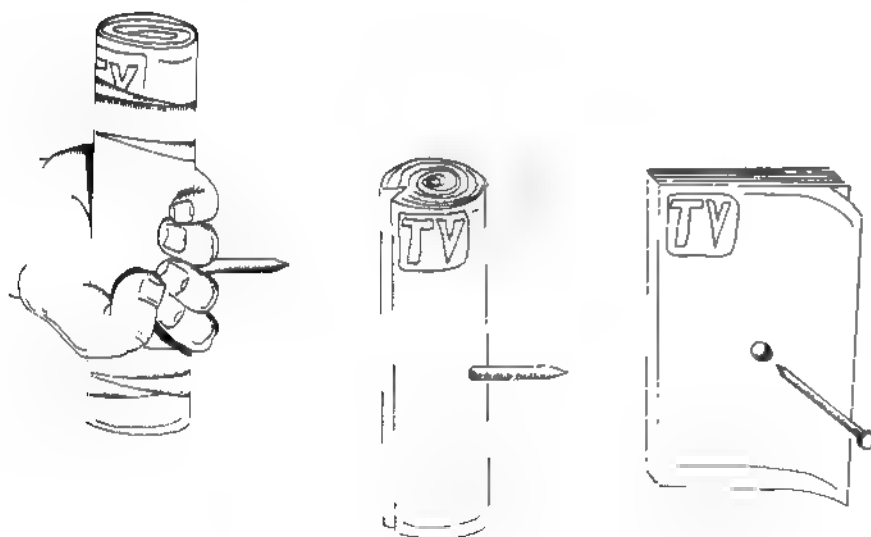
- i. "Push fist" use
- ii. Inside grip use

One Steel Nation variation of the "push knife" is to press a large nail or spike through a small *TV Guide*-sized magazine, and then bind the magazine with either rubber bands or with tape. This makes an excellent weapon for attacking into the

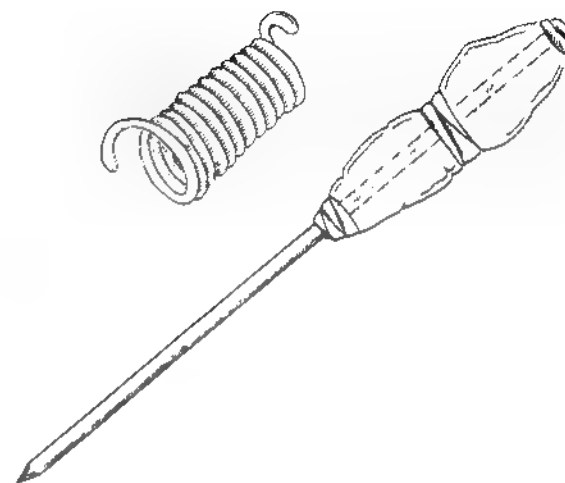
eyes and throat from the front, and into the base of the skull from behind.

Remember: Whenever a stabbing weapon is employed, the attacker must still thrust-punch it at the victim the same way a "jabber" does.

An excellent "ice pick" stabbing weapon can be made by straightening out a prison bedspring, wrapping the handle in cloth and tape, and filing down the "business end" on concrete.



**Figure 15**  
Steel Nation "push knife"



**Figure 16**  
Ice pick from bedspring

**Cutting Weapons.** Cutting and slashing weapons can be made from a variety of sources.

Any loose tin can lid can be used to slice open an enemy. The serrated edge of a tin can lid make an excellent cutting edge. The rougher the edge, the better for inflicting bodily harm.

Tragically, in the spring of 1991, just such a "lid-fist" weapon was used by an enraged inmate at the Southern Ohio Penitentiary to slice the throat of a female employee.

Bend up the edge of the tin can lid, until you have a space wide enough for your hand to get a good grip. Always be sure to insulate your hand, either by wearing gloves or by placing a cloth between your hand and the serrated edge.

As previously mentioned, this "lid-fist" is easily hidden in a cell's trashcan.



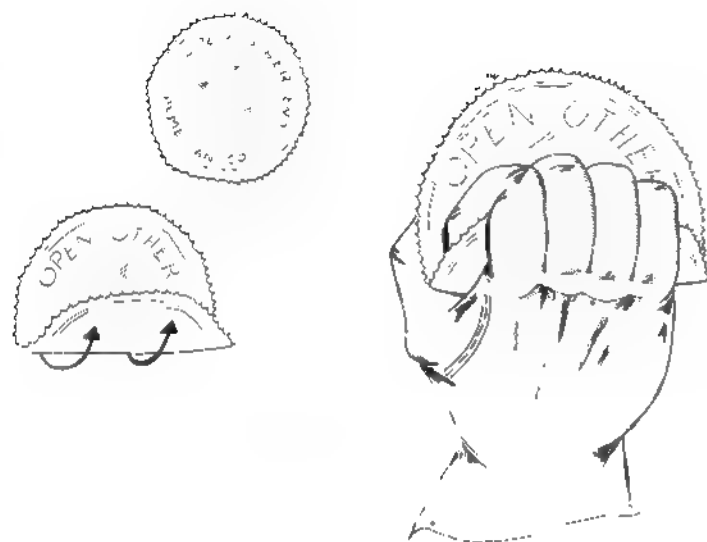


Figure 17  
"Lid-fist"

Razor blades, whether single-edged or double-edged, are easy to acquire, easy to conceal, and easy to turn into weapons.

The simplest method is to conceal a single-edged razor blade on your finger.

First, glue a matchbook cover around the lower part of the blade (to protect your own finger). Then, secure the blade to your finger with a flesh-colored rubber band. Carried in such a manner, the razor blade can be easily flipped into position for slicing with a flick of the thumb. This "Finger-wave" weapon is especially popular with prison prostitutes.

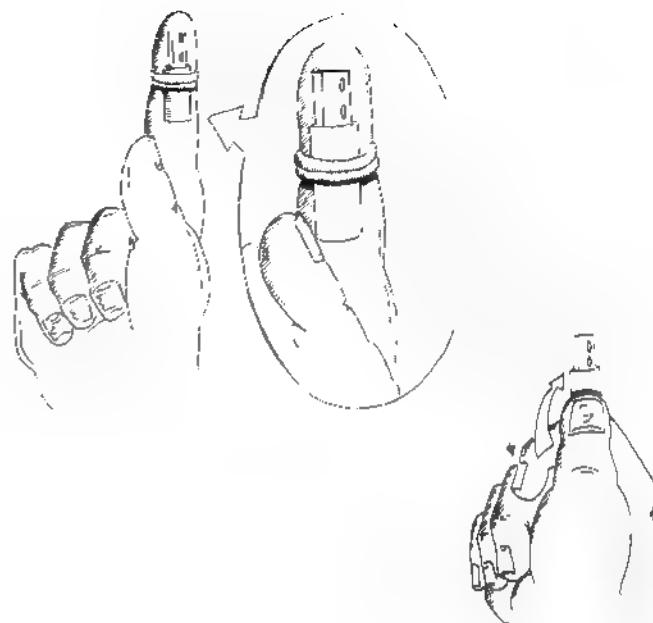
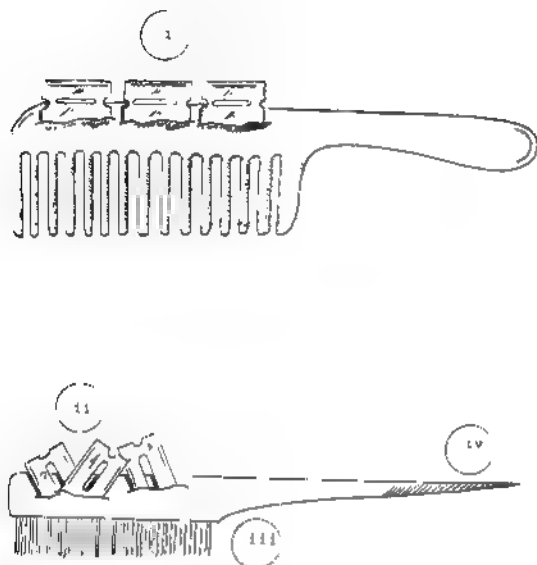


Figure 18  
"Finger-wave" razor blade use

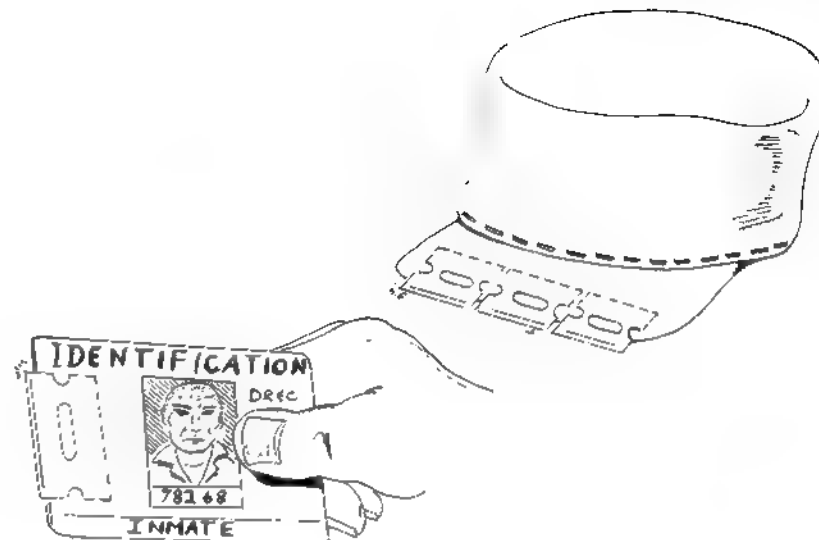
Other easily constructed razor blade weapons are made by melting razor blades into the handles or under the bristles of hair brushes and large afro-combs.



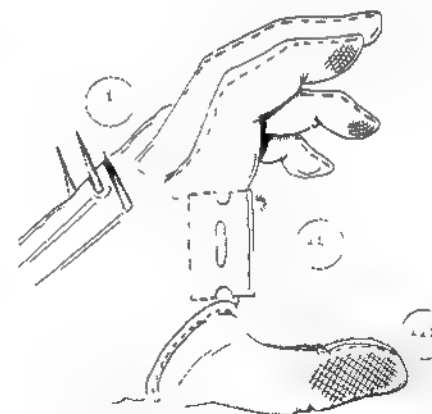
**Figure 19**  
 Razor blade augmentation/combs and brushes

- i. Afro-comb augmented with razor blades
- ii. Brush augmented with razor blades
- iii. Razor blades can also be hidden in a brushes' bristles
- iv. The handle of a "rattail" brush sharpened for use as a "shank"

Still other variations involve sewing razor blades inside the brim of a hat, the lining of clothing or inside an identification card. Razor blades can also be sewn into gloves.



**Figure 20**  
 Razor blade augmentation/hat and I.D.



**Figure 21**  
 Augmented glove

- i. Spike augmentation
- ii. Razor Blade Augmentation
- iii. Toxin-soaked

## Bludgeons

It is instinctual when giving vent to those most basic of emotions, fear and rage, that a man should reach down — and back to his primordial origins — to pick up the first and most basic tools of his survival: the rock and the club. In an emergency, you can clobber an enemy or an attacker over the head with anything from a fair-sized rock to a tree limb.

In the Steel Nation prisoners have been killed by bricks and cement blocks, stones literally ripped from the wall of the prison itself. Prisoners have been killed by lead pipes, baseball bats, and by heavy metal mop-wringers. They have been killed by having heavy objects dropped on them from an upper-tier walkway and by socks filled with rocks.

Bludgeons are the easiest of Steel Nation environmental weapons to acquire, conceal, and use. In November 1994, America's most notorious serial killer, Jeffrey Dahmer learned this fact the hard way.

In need of a weapon, an inmate can quickly fill an old sweat sock with batteries, rocks, or a few pieces of hard prison-issue soap to make an effective "slap-jack" type bludgeon. In Steel Nation slang, this flexible weapon is referred to generically as "Soap-on-a-rope."

*Soap-on-a-rope* is an excellent example of a Steel Nation environmental weapon; a weapon whose individual components (sock, batteries, or hard bars of soap) can be kept openly and yet, when quickly put together, becomes a formidable weapon.

A favored version of this type of flexible bludgeon calls for affixing a heavy combination lock to a sturdy belt.

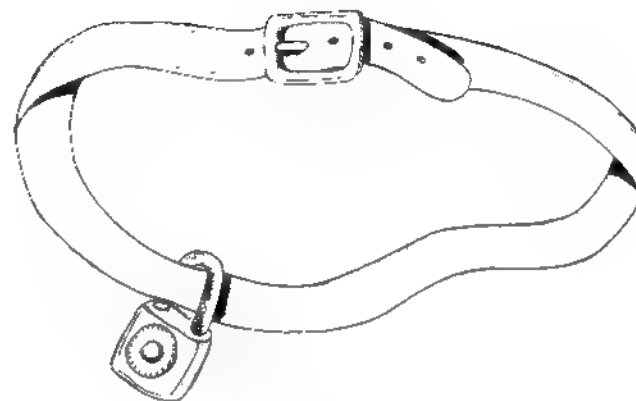


Figure 22  
Belt and lock bludgeon

A belt can make an effective shield when held taut between the hands.

A belt also makes an effective weapon when spun in a figure eight and used for slapping and stunning an attacker, especially if you strike him with the buckle.

When the weight of a lock is added to the belt, the spinning velocity and subsequent force of impact is greater.

Other belts can be snapped forward like a "rattail" towel, targeting the enemy's face.

Another easily assembled environmental weapon can be fashioned from a simple handkerchief.

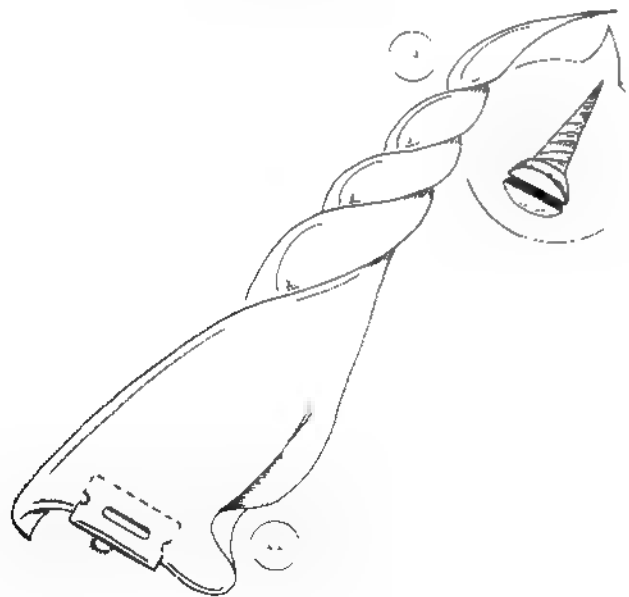
If you've ever had someone snap you with a wet-ended "rattail" towel, then you know how much it hurts. In this same way, any piece of cloth can be snapped into an enemy's eyes, either to elicit a flinch-blink reaction or in order to temporarily

— or permanently — blind him by injuring or destroying his eye(s).

Steel Nation veterans augment simple handkerchiefs by sewing a pointed-tipped screw securely into the end of the fabric.

When snapped like a rattail towel, it is the screw that impacts with the victim's eye skewering it, popping it like a balloon.

A prisoner's innocent-looking handkerchief can also hide one or more lethal razor blades.

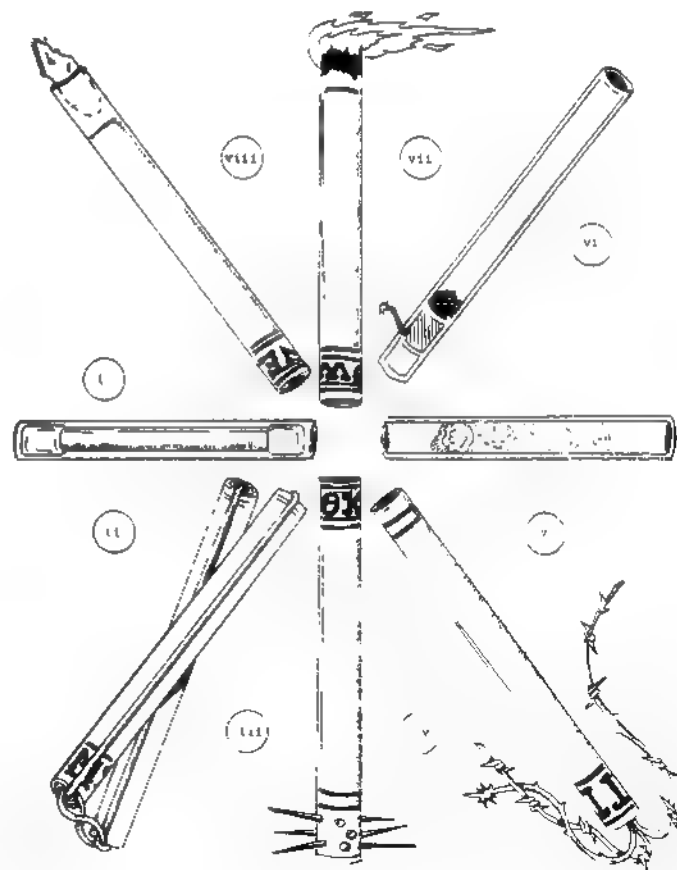


**Figure 23**  
Handkerchief weapons

- i Screw sewn into fabric
- ii Razor blade sewn into fabric

Another weapon that meets the Steel Nation environmental weapons criteria for easy concealment, easy access, and effectiveness, is a simple rolled-up magazine.

A rolled-up magazine by itself can be used to strike into an attacker's "soft" targets (eyes, throat). A magazine can also be augmented to house several hidden weapons.



**Figure 24**  
Several magazine uses



(i) *Pipe bludgeons* can easily be hidden inside any rolled-up magazine or newspaper.

A favored Skinhead weapon is the "Millwall Brick": a sizeable rock folded up inside a newspaper in such a way as to allow the newspaper to be used as a club. Once the dirty deed is done, it is a simple matter to let the rock drop to the ground, fold up the "innocent" newspaper, and walk away.

(ii) *Nunchakus* ("Numbchucks") are made by soaking two same-sized magazines in Elmer's glue. When they have dried, the magazines will be as hard as wood. Tied together with a stout cord, they can be used to flail an enemy in the same manner as more traditional nunchakus.

(iii) A *Spiked Mace* bludgeon is fashioned by driving nails and other spikes through one end of a tightly wrapped magazine. Soaking the "mace" in Elmer's glue adds rigidity.

Another variation of the mace can be made by tying a weight to the end of a cord and then securing the cord to a rolled-up magazine for a better grip.

(iv) A *Barbed Wire Flail* can be constructed by wrapping a magazine handle around several strands of barbed wire, thorny briars or bunches of metal clothes hangers.

(v) *Blowguns* of various sorts can be constructed by rolling up (and gluing) a magazine, leaving both ends open, and filling the center with an irritating powder such as cayenne pepper.

More tightly rolled magazines and similar tubes can be used to blow darts of various sorts at an enemy. (See section on *Poison*.)

(vi) *Shotguns*. (See section on *Bombs and Guns*.)

(vii) *Torches* can be made from any rolled-up magazine or newspaper. A torch can be used to hold an attacker at bay and/or can cause severe damage when thrust into an enemy's face.

(viii) *Shanks* of various kinds (glass, metal, sharp sticks, sharpened bones) can be affixed to magazines to create short spears, thereby helping to extend your reach.

## Strangulation

More than one prisoner has been discovered hanging in his cell, victim of an "apparent suicide." What isn't "apparent" to people on the outside is that, in the Steel Nation, "suicide" by hanging is often "assisted" by a cellmate or by a guard.

Forced to cell with another prisoner they just can't stand another minute, a prisoner will knock out his cellie and then string him up, making it look like a suicide.

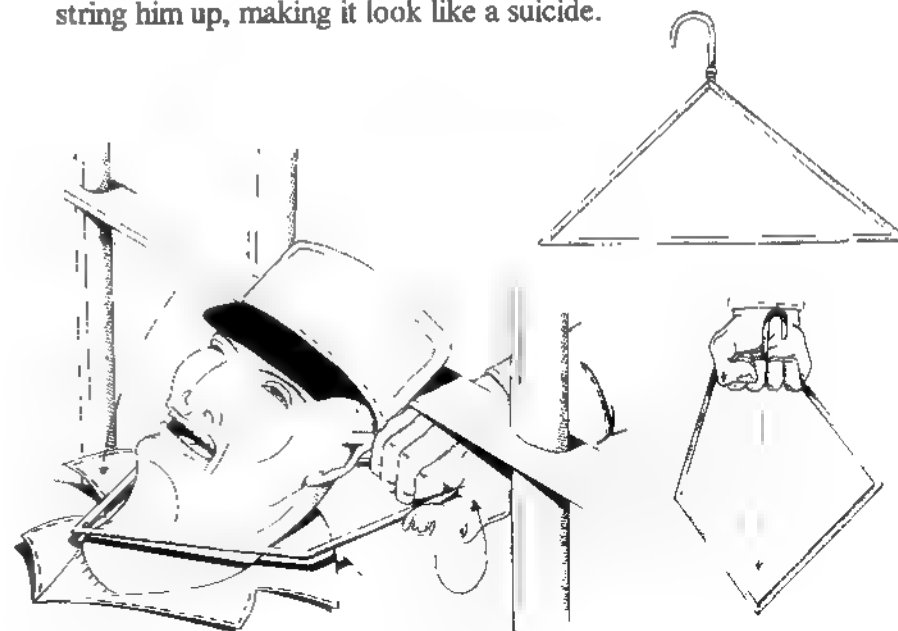


Figure 25  
Hanger garrote

Over the years, guards have also been accused of using this expedient method to rid themselves of bothersome inmates.

Strangulation is a simple way to deal with an enemy since the weapon required accomplishing the deed is readily available.

For example, a simple metal clothes hanger can make an excellent garrote.

The best strangulation tools are those such as the hanger garrote that only require one hand. This way, once the garrote is dropped over the victim's head, a strong twist of the wrist tightens the garrote around the victim's throat. This allows your second hand to remain free to fend off the victim's struggles and/or deliver softening-up strikes into the victim: side of the head, spine, and or kidneys.

Other tried and true Steel Nation strangulation tools include a short piece of wood or pipe, circular UHF antenna, handkerchiefs, braided dental floss, belts, a sock, electric cords, plastic garbage bags, even a newspaper.

Other methods of asphyxiating an enemy including placing a plastic bag over a victim's head, drowning them, or throwing a caustic substance in their face that clogs their throat.

Any strong blow to a victim's throat with hand or bludgeon can crush the larynx, block the trachea, and cause asphyxiation.

An attacker intent on strangling a victim will catch him with his back to an obstacle such as a short wall or the bars of a cell (see Figure 25).

## Poison

Before he finally succeeded in killing a fellow prisoner with a bomb, South Carolina's bloodiest serial killer, PeeWee

Gaskins, attempted to kill the man as many as five times with poison. (See section on *Bombs and Guns*.)

More often than not, Steel Nation poisonings are quickly written off as "heart attack" or "death due to heat exhaustion."

The difficulty with poisoning a fellow prisoner is not the availability of poisons — there are plenty to choose from in the Steel Nation. For example, there is enough *Nicotine* (a poison) in a single pack of cigarettes to kill several people.

The problem with using poison to kill is finding a viable delivery system, i.e., a way to get the poison *into* your victim.

While inmates have been known to use more exotic poison delivery methods such as blowgun darts and poison fumes (See: Chart #1, *Lily of the Valley*), much simpler methods are usually used.

How hard do you think it is for your disgruntled (or bribed) cellmate to slip a little extra "flavoring" into your morning coffee?

Common poisons such as mercury and rat poison are available to inmates, especially those working in the prison kitchen. Such poisons can easily be slipped into your food as you pass through the inmate chow line.

One ploy used by inmates working in the inmate dining hall passing out food is to put poison into a small portion of the food they are serving, perhaps a corner. They can then pass out harmless scoops of food to all inmates until their target passes through the line, at which time, they simply scoop up the poisoned portion of food, plopping it on the tray of their intended victim.

Of course, truly psychotic inmates could care less if they have to poison half the prison just to get to a particular enemy.

Ground glass and rat poison are two Steel Nation kitchen favorites.

Many prison kitchens are notoriously dirty, so should an inmate die of food poisoning (botulism), murder will probably

not be suspected. Such poisons can be "bred" through deliberately letting food spoil, then mixing the poisoned food in with fresh food. *Botulin* — a virulent poison produced by bacteria, capable of surviving temperatures from 459 degrees below zero to 212 degrees above zero — and *Salmonella* can both be cultivated by prison chemists.

The kitchen can also be the source of such poisons as *rhubarb* (boil the leaves down in a pan of water and you are left with a deadly broth) and *tomato leaves* (when eaten can cause cardiac problems leading to eventual cardiac arrest).

*Medications* passed out to inmates for a variety of ills can also be saved up to kill their fellow inmates.

Heart medications such as *Digitalis* (derived from the seeds of Foxglove) are especially good for this since the victim's death is usually ruled a "heart attack."

Antidepressant MOAI's (Monoamine oxidase inhibitors) such as *Nardil* and *Parnate* can cause heart seizure when mixed with pickles, dairy products, and various kinds of allergy medications.

In addition to commonly prescribed medications and sundry rat poisons available to prisoners, and depending on the type of institution you are assigned to, various common plants can also be used to poison your fellow inmates.

Did you know the foliage and acorns of *oak*, when ingested, can cause kidney failure leading to death?

Several common plants and flowers are poisonous. Prisoners get their hands on such plants and flowers either because their particular institution permits inmates to decorate their cells with personal plants and grow gardens — "therapy" — or because staff often bring in plants and flowers to decorate their offices.

Some prisons are barren places with only concrete slabs for recreation yards. Other prisons, even some maximum-security institutions, have open-air recreation yards which sport trees,

shrubs, and large grassy stretches. Still other correctional facilities, mostly lesser-security work farms, are surrounded by open fields and forests that readily lend themselves to the gathering of poisonous plants.

There are hundreds of common plants and flowers that will make you sick as a dog if ingested. Some can cause heart and kidney failure, induce delusions, or have other adverse effects on the human body.

Such plants as Jimson Weed and Morning Glory seeds are actively sought out by inmates for their narcotic effect though, in large enough doses, both can be fatal.

Chart #1 gives only a partial listing of the dozens of common poisonous plants and flowers conceivably within the reach of prisoners.

Chart #1: Common Poisonous Flowers and Plants

<u>Plant or Flower</u>	<u>Poisonous Parts</u>
Autumn Crocus	Bulbs
Azalea	All parts
Belladonna	All parts, seeds
Castor Bean	Seeds and foliage
Daffodil	Bulbs
Daphne	Red or yellow berries
Deadly Nightshade	All parts, especially unripe berries
Delphinium	All parts, seeds
Dumb cane	All parts
Elephant's Ear	All parts
Foxglove	Leaves, seeds and flowers
Golden Chain	All parts, seeds
Hemlock	All parts (just ask Socrates!)
Hyacinth	Bulbs
Hydrangea	Leaves, bulbs, branches
Jimson Weed	All parts

Plant or Flower

Larkspur  
Laurel  
Lily of the Valley

Mistletoe  
Morning Glory  
Narcissus  
Oak  
Oleander  
Philodendron  
Poinsettia  
Privet  
Rhododendron  
Rhubarb  
Rosary Pea (Jequirity bean)  
Tomato  
Wild Mushrooms

Poisonous Parts

All parts, seeds  
All parts  
Leaves and flowers  
(fermented, produces  
poison gas)  
All parts, berries  
Seeds  
Bulbs  
Foliage and acorns  
All parts  
All parts  
All parts  
Leaves and berries  
All parts  
Leaves  
Foliage and seeds  
Leaves  
Some varieties are  
poisonous

Some rules to live by, in order to avoid becoming a Steel Nation poison victim:

- Prepare your own food and drinks whenever possible.
- Guard any food or drink you are already eating or drinking. It only takes a second for a passing inmate to drop something in your food or drink.
- Know your cellmate, your friends, and associates.
- Never drink from an open container given to you by another inmate, even if that inmate is well-known to you. *His* awareness of poisoning might not be as keen as yours.
- Examine *all* food you get from another inmate. This includes food passed to you in the inmate dining hall and food (even sealed) you purchase in the inmate commissary.
- Never eat any food or drink someone has thrown in your cell. For one thing, it could be poisoned. At the very least, it

could be a set up for a "trickbag" where, after you eat the food, an inmate shows up claiming ownership, demanding payment in excess of the food's actual worth, "taxing" for you having "dissed" the owner of the food.

- Finally, when in doubt, *throw it out!*  
Words to *live* by while a guest of the Steel Nation.

## Bombs and Guns

In 1926, 900 rioting prisoners escaped into the surrounding countryside after they used homemade explosives to blow the main gates off Washington state's Walla Walla Prison. (All were eventually recaptured by state troopers.)

In December 1931, seven of the Leavenworth, Kansas State Prison's most notorious prisoners escaped after an arsenal of guns and dynamite were smuggled into the prison.

More recently, on September 12, 1982, a powerful explosion rocked the High-Security cellblock at the South Carolina Central Correctional Institution. When the smoke cleared, authorities were scraping what little was left of death row inmate Rudolph Tyner off his cell wall.

Tyner had been killed by a blast of C-4 explosive that had been smuggled into the prison.

Another prisoner, Donald "PeeWee" Gaskins was subsequently charged with the killing.

Gaskins was no novice when it came to killing in general or prison killing techniques in particular.

According to authorities, the diminutive Gaskins began his killing career early, "making his bones" during his first prison "bit" by killing a "powerman" with a paring knife stolen from the prison kitchen.



Feigning friendship, Gaskins succeeded in getting close enough to his target to slit the man's throat while the prison crime boss sat on the commode.

In and out of prison most of his life, Gaskins was suspected of dozens of murders while free and finally ended up sentenced to life at South Carolina's Central Correctional Institution. While at CCI, Gaskins was contracted by a vengeful son who was not content to see Rudolph Tyner, the murderer of his parents, spend years sitting on death row.

Once again, Gaskins feigned friendship with an intended target — rocking him to sleep — by smuggling food and drugs in to the death row inmate.

Then, on *five* separate occasions, Gaskins tried killing Tyner with various poisons his employer had smuggled into the prison.

When poison failed, Gaskins decided to use a bomb.

The explosive device was reportedly smuggled into the prison in three parts: a length of wire came in wrapped around the speaker cones of a radio. Electric screw-connectors came in inside a pack of cigarettes. The C-4 explosive itself waltzed past prison security in the hollowed-out heels of a pair of boots.

As to *who* actually brought the bomb makings into the prison, according to Gaskins' posthumous autobiography:

*"Of course, I won't name any names, but it took some real well-paid official-help to get some of them things in."* (Gaskins, 1993: 247)

Once the components were in his hands, it was a simple matter to set his "friend" Tyner up for the kill.

Offering to share a radio with his "friend," Gaskins ran a wire from his cell to a speaker in Tyner's cell. No sooner had Tyner indicated he was holding the C-4 filled speaker to his ear, than Gaskins plugged the other end of the wires into his cell's electrical outlet.

Nine years later, on September 6, 1991, South Carolina treated Donald "PeeWee" Gaskins to a fatal dose of the "Edison Medicine" for the bombing death of Rudolph Tyner.

Whether explosives are smuggled into a prison past the watchful eyes of prison officials or, as seems apparent in the Tyner killing, with the complicity of prison staff, it is not unheard of for inmates to get their hands on explosives. Neither is it unheard of for other prisoners — and staff — to suffer when they do.

### **Explosives**

The idea behind an explosion is to trap rapidly expanding gases in a confined space. Unable to further expand, the pressure builds to an intolerable level. This inevitably results in the trapped gases breaking (exploding) the container. The broken pieces of the container — metal, glass, wood — thrown off by the force of the explosion are shrapnel. In most cases, it is not the force of an explosion that kills, it is shrapnel and flying debris.

Over the years, both prisoners and staff have been killed and wounded by Steel Nation explosives.

Barring outside help, there are still dozens of ways prisoners can put together effective explosive devices.

*Black powder*, for use in bombs and zip guns, consists of 75% saltpeter (potassium nitrate), 15% charcoal, and 10% sulfur. Sulfur can be obtained from common matches. Charcoal can be had from various sources within a prison, including art supplies. Potassium nitrate crystals, an ingredient in several explosives, can be made from human and animal urine and manure.

A choking smoke bomb can easily be made by blending four parts of sugar and six parts saltpeter. Combined with fumes of Lily of the Valley, such a smoke bomb can be deadly

in a small enclosed space such as a cell. (See section on *Poisons*.)

In October, 1991, Tide and other powdered detergents were removed from the inmate commissary at the Southern Ohio Prison after officials discovered inmates were attempting to use hydrogen peroxide to leach *phosphates* from the detergents. Phosphate acts as an energy releaser when bound to nitrogen or to a carboxyl such as ketone. *Ketone* is known to most people as *acetone*.

Acetone (volatile, flammable) is not that hard for a determined prisoner to acquire. It is a prime ingredient in paint strippers and solvents (found in prison work shops).

Strangely enough, acetone is also found in abnormal quantities in the urine of diabetics.

Mix acetone with a nitrate (e.g., fertilizer, used in prison gardening and "beautification" projects), mush it together with a little petroleum jelly and wrap the whole mess in clear plastic wrap, and you have a powerful explosive easily detonated with a few volts of electricity.

*Nitrates*, integral in mixing several explosives, can be found in fertilizer and plant food, and as *cellulose nitrate* in lacquer and varnish.

*Nitric acid* can also be found in fertilizers and in some dyes.

When combined, nitric acid plus polystyrene make an excellent plastique explosive.

Fortunately for prison authorities, most inmates can't even spell C-H-E-M-I-S-T-R-Y.

Still, it doesn't take an Einstein to figure out that if you pack a thousand match heads (ignition temperature 325 degrees Fahrenheit) into a soda pop can and add a wick — *voila!* — instant bomb.

Any flammable liquid can be used to make a firebomb.

Fumes of flammable liquids, gases, and even fine flammable dusts can be easily excited into blowing up.

In September 1991, actor Burt Reynolds was nearly consumed by flames while filming on the set of *Evening Shade*. A stagehand mistakenly filled a prop fire extinguisher with *cornstarch* instead of baby powder laced with talcum as was usual. Cornstarch is highly flammable, especially when sprayed out in a fine dust, whereas talc is not flammable.

"Contents under pressure" cans (many of which contain explosive gases such as *propane*) cannot only be used as makeshift flame throwers (by holding a match in front of their spray) but such cans can be combined with a proper detonator and rigged to explode when punctured.

*Butane* lighters can also be rigged to explode. While these little lighters are not deadly by themselves, they can be used in many instances to help augment or to help detonate larger bombs. (See Figure 27.)

*Linseed Oil*-soaked rags are subject to spontaneous combustion. Since linseed releases heat as it dries, the "fast drying" brands of linseed oil are the most dangerous.

The point is obvious: what explosives prisoners can't smuggle in, they can manufacture themselves.

### Detonators

Detonating a bomb is simply a matter of bringing together two things that shouldn't be together: heat with a flammable material; two wires connecting an electric charge to an explosive.

*Sparks and Flames*, whether caused by accident or on purpose, can ignite a fire and/or detonate an explosive.

The simplest of arsonists' time-delay devices is made from a book of matches through which a lit cigarette has been placed. (See Figure 26.)

Other simple sparking devices include affixing a lighter-striker and flint to a door, cabinet, etc. that an enemy opens.

Such a booby trap can be used to trigger heat-sensitive explosives and/or explosive gas build-up. (See Figure 27.)

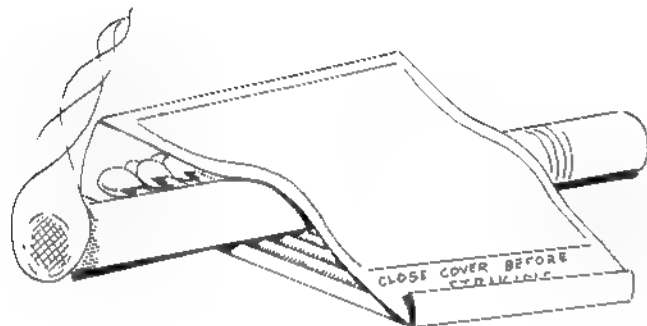


Figure 26

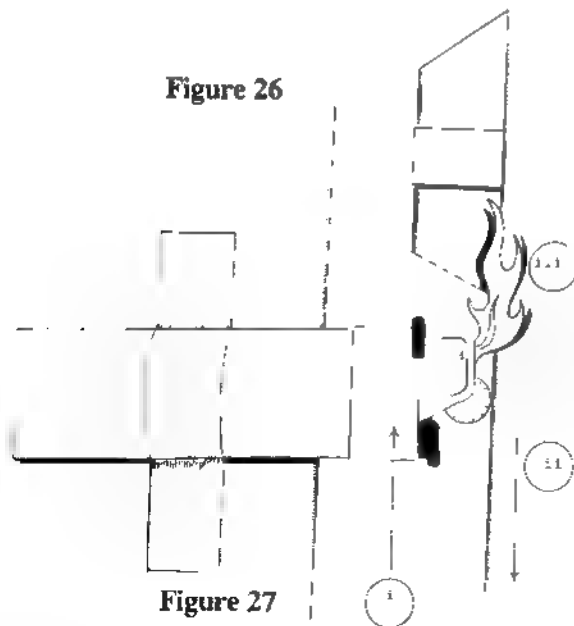


Figure 27

- i. Butane lighter (striker-flint)
- ii. As door, etc. is opened, friction triggers sparks/flame
- iii. Igniting fire/explosive

*Homemade Fuses* can be made by drawing a glue-soaked string through granulated match heads (or black powder) until the string is completely covered. Wrap the powder-covered string with cellophane tape.

A small "mini-bomb" can be affixed to the end of the fuse by packing a collection of match heads together. This mini-explosive can be used to trigger a larger explosive, in much the same way an atom bomb is used to trigger a hydrogen bomb. (See Figure 28.)

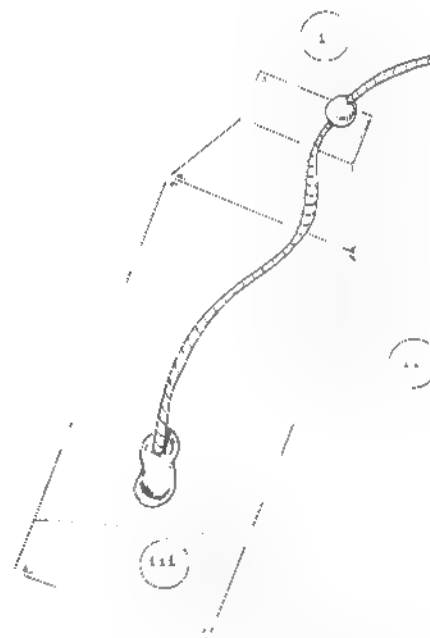


Figure 28  
Mini-bombs

- i. Mini bomb set at mouth of explosive
- ii. Mini-bomb set in flammable-explosive fumes
- iii. Flammable explosive liquid and/or gas

A variation on the simple granulated match heads fuse, the "stripper-fuse," calls for *not* wrapping the powder-covered string in cellophane. When dry, the powdered string can be drawn through a match-striker that has been rolled into a tube so the striker is on the inside. As the powdered string-fuse is drawn through the stripper tube, the fuse is ignited. This is used for setting booby traps the victim must trigger. Such a fuse can be attached to a variety of booby traps. (See Figure 29.)

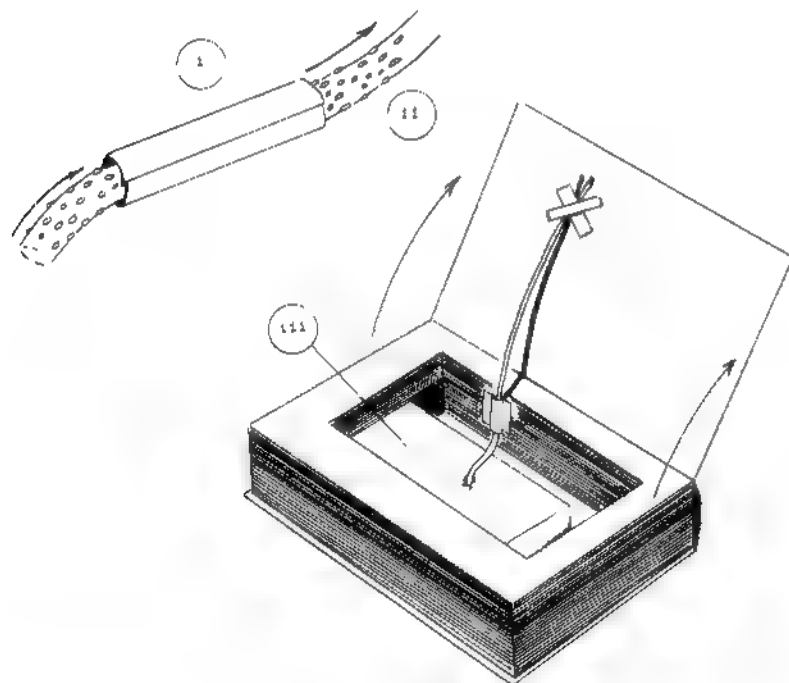


Figure 29  
"Stripper-fuse"

- i. Match-striker surface, rolled with striker face inward
- ii. Pull-fuse
- iii. Flammable/explosive material

*Electricity* can be used to detonate several types of explosives. In the case of the Gaskins-Tyner bombing, the C-4 used was detonated electrically.

Batteries, available in all prisons, can be used to construct simple heat-detonation devices. For example, a simple fountain pen spring packed with match heads and wired to a 6/12 volt battery will act like a toaster coil, igniting the match heads, and starting a fire or firing an attached explosive. (See Figure 30.)

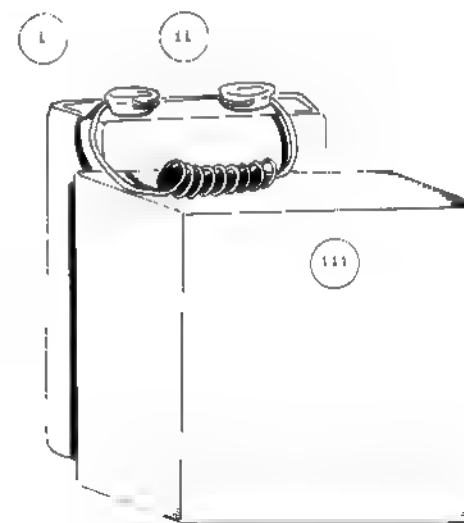


Figure 30  
Volt-detonator

- i. Battery
- ii. Match heads wrapped by spring
- iii. Flammable/explosive material

## **Bombs**

*Grenades* are one of the most popular of Steel Nation bombs. The simplest version is a soda pop can packed tight with thousands of granulated match heads (or black powder). Screws and small nails are taped to the outside of the can to add extra shrapnel to the explosion. When a short fuse is affixed, the "grenade" is ready for business.

*Firebombs.* As Mr. Molotov would tell you, any bottle filled with gasoline, kerosene, paint thinner or any other flammable liquid, topped with a twisted wick, makes an excellent "cocktail." Even a small firebomb can have a devastating effect in a 7' x 11' prison cell.

*Light bulb bomb.* In cells that sport bare incandescent bulbs, replace an enemy's light bulb with a light bulb filled with a homemade napalm mixture of flammable fuel and liquid soap (preferably one of a glycerin base). As soon as the light is switched on, the current explodes the mixture, spraying the cell and your foe with sticky liquid fire.

*Butane lighters.* There are several ways to rig a simple butane lighter to explode. At the very least, such a lighter can be used to trigger a larger explosive. (See Figure 27.)

## **Guns and Zip Guns**

From Billy the Kid escaping the Lincoln County jail with a pistol hidden in an outhouse by a sympathizer, to John Dillinger bluffing his way out of Crown Point, Indiana lock-up using a "pistol" fashioned out of soap and covered with bootblack, the specter of the gun rears its head time and time again in the Steel Nation.

We already mentioned the December, 1931, breakout when seven of Leavenworth, Kansas State Prison's most notorious prisoners escaped after an arsenal of pistols, rifles, shotguns, and dynamite was smuggled into the prison in boxes of shoe

paste, something prisoners knew guards were forbidden to search.

July 1974: Two inmates and two hostages are shot to death in an exchange of gunfire when Huntsville Texas Prison guards attempt to free staff members being held after an eleven-day hostage situation resulting from a botched breakout attempt.

The three inmates were armed with pistols reportedly smuggled into the prison inside a spoiled ham by a trustee working in the officer's dining room. The ammunition entered the prison inside cans of peaches.

August 1979: Fifteen inmates break out of the West Virginia State Prison at Moundsville after pulling a gun and a knife on visiting-room guards.

Summer 1998: An inmate successfully escapes from the Ross County Correctional Facility in Ohio disguised as a guard after taking the officer's uniform at gunpoint. The gun was reportedly smuggled into the prison inside a television.

If a prisoner can't get a gun and ammunition smuggled in to him, he'll settle for just the bullets. Once an inmate has bullets, it is simply a matter for him to construct a workable zip gun. (See Figures 31 and 32.)

When prisoners can't get manufactured guns and/or ammunition smuggled into them, they manufacture their own.

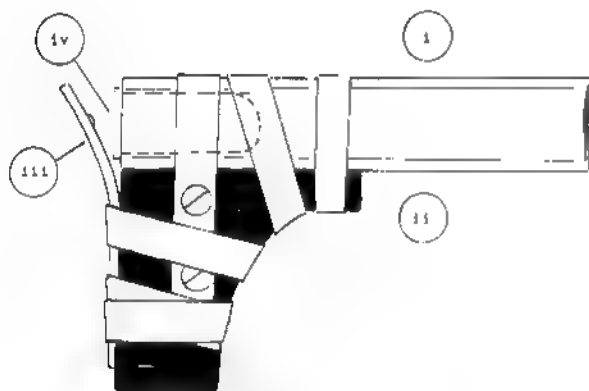
A gun is no more than a tube with a controlled explosion of gas trapped in it. In any explosion, gases escape in the direction of least resistance. In the case of a firearm, the path of least resistance is toward the unblocked end of the tube (barrel).

If there just happens to be a small object (a piece of lead or a ball-bearing) in the way, the object (bullet) is blasted out of the way by the expanding gases.

Steel Nation gun barrels are made from pieces of pipe, tubing, antennas, and even rolled-up magazines

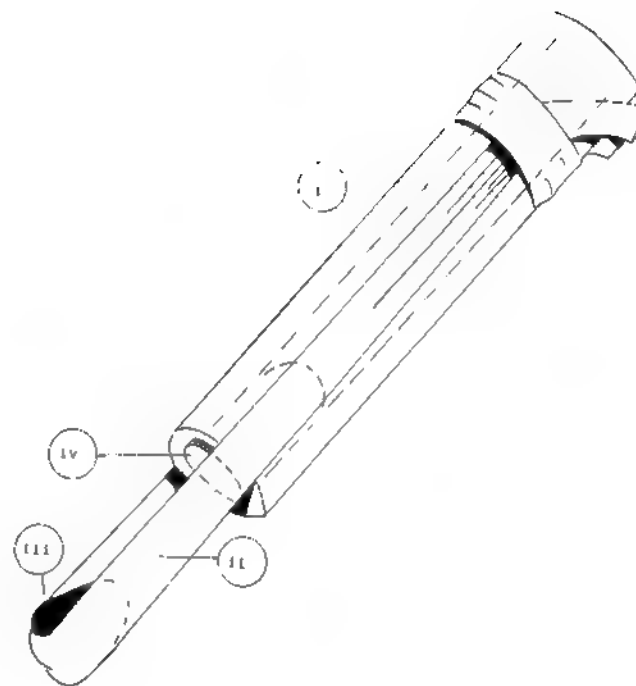


It is always best for safety's sake to use metal to construct your zip gun barrel, though, in an emergency, thick plastic (PVC) tubing or a rolled-up magazine can be substituted.



**Figure 31**  
Zip gun #1

- i. Pipe (barrel)
- ii. Support
- iii. Flexible ("Thumb back") firing hammer
- iv. Bullet



**Figure 32**  
Zip Gun #2

- i. Barrel
- ii. Rubber Tubing
- iii. Striker/firing pin
- iv. Bullet



Figure 33  
Magazine shotgun

(i) In order to construct a "Magazine Shotgun," roll up a *Time*-sized magazine and soak it in Elmer's glue. Allow it to thoroughly dry. Further reinforce the magazine with duct tape. One end of the magazine must be securely crimped (to prevent back-blast).

(ii) Once your barrel is finished, a small hole is bored through near the rear of the barrel. Into this bore-hole, insert a fuse (See section on *Homemade Fuses*). Make sure you have a tight fit for your fuse-wick.

(iii) Down the barrel of your shotgun, pour granulated match heads (or black powder). Only experimentation and common sense can tell you how much powder to use. Tamp the explosive powder tightly.

(iv) Place wadding in the barrel so the powder will not be loose.

(v) In front of the wadding, place your "shot." Ideally, this consists of BBs or a ball-bearing. A favored Steel Nation

substitute for shot is made by chipping off pieces of a tin can. In an emergency, any small objects can be used as "bullets."

After packing your shot, place light wadding in front of your shot to prevent your shot rolling out the end.

Your shotgun is now ready for firing.

Some zip gun use rules to *live* by:

- Wear thick gloves and protective glasses whenever possible without arousing a target's suspicions.
- Hold zip guns as far away from your body as possible when firing.
- Place a barrier between yourself and the zip gun before firing.
- Hold zip guns as close as possible to the victim. Ideally, press the barrel of the gun into his throat or eye before firing.
- Always have a *back-up weapon* (shank, etc.) at the ready in case the zip gun misfires.

### Gun Substitutes

At California's new — but already notorious — Pelican Bay super-maximum-security prison, built to confine prisoners who commit violent acts at other California prisons, guards are required to wear projectile-proof vests.

Unlike bullet-proof vests, which knives and other pointed weapons easily penetrate, projectile-proof vests are specially designed to offer protection against knives, spears, darts, and other Steel Nation stabbing weapons. This is in recognition of the fact that not only can prisoners manufacture their own guns and ammunition but, when the ingredients for firearms cannot be had, convicts can construct a bevy of other — equally lethal — projectile weapons.

*Throwing Darts* can be made simply by sharpening a spike. Through experimentation, weight can be added and adjusted

on these darts to insure maximum target penetration. Smaller versions of darts can carry poisons (botulin, etc.), while larger darts can kill by penetrating vital organs.

*Blowguns* can fire darts and/or irritating blinding powders designed to incapacitate an enemy.

*Slingshots* are easily constructed by securing a length of rubber to a support of metal, wood, or plastic.

Traditional Y-shaped slingshots can deliver ball bearings and stones with enough force to the head of an enemy to stun or kill him.

Other slings can fire lethal arrow-bolts. (See Figure 34.)



**Figure 34**  
Arrow-sling #1

A variation on the "Hawaiian sling" underwater spear gun is easily constructed using a rigid tube, a length of pliant rubber, and a homemade spear.

Slings vary in size, but even a small version, shooting an arrow the size of a pencil, can seriously injure and even kill when striking an enemy's throat and eyes. (See Figure 35.)



**Figure 35**  
Arrow-sling #2

To make a Steel Nation version of the Hawaiian Sling, the shaft of the "spear" (any rigid length of metal, wood, or plastic) is pushed through a tube that doubles as a hand-grip (i).

The spear is then seated in the rubber sling (ii).

The spear gun is armed and aimed by pulling back on the seated spear in much the same way one draws a bow or more conventional slingshot (iii).

*Syringes* can be used to inject poisons or can be used to spray poisons and irritants into an enemy's eyes.

In an emergency, a syringe can be stabbed into the flesh or eyes of an attacker to distract or blind.

*Squirt guns* made from squeeze bottles and from other bladders can fire blinding liquids (cayenne pepper "mace," lye, etc.).

Darts can be fired using squeeze bottle water pressure.

Squirt guns can also be filled with flammable liquids that can be sprayed on a foe before putting the torch to him.

## Conclusion

Between 1979 and 1983, inmates at "America's Toughest Prison," the federal lock-up at Marion, Illinois, committed 81 weapon assaults on other inmates and 41 weapon assaults on staff, resulting in the death of thirteen inmates and two prison staff members.

One prison employee was stabbed 27 times, but survived.

In November 1994, the Feds opened the new ADX maximum-security prison in Florence, Colorado, an institution designed to replace Marion; an institution incorporating hard lessons learned at Marion.

According to one source, this new prison is "...the most restrictive federal prison environment in the nation." (Scripps-Howard, 1995.)

At ADX, inmates are confined to their cells 22 hours a day. Metal bed frames, chairs, desks, and shelves found in other prisons have been replaced at ADX by molded furniture (bed, stool, desk, and shelves) that are part of the prefabricated concrete cell walls.

Authorities are convinced that "Inside each cell, technology has stripped inmates of potential weapons." (*Ibid.*)

Perhaps.

There are thousands of ways to die in the Steel Nation and no way to insure you won't become a statistic before seeing the end of your Steel Nation visit.

Remember: *Vigilance* is your only hope, *determination* to survive, your only ally.

Take to heart these Steel Nation survival maxims:

- If you must do violence, do *efficient* violence.
- Strike the first blow.
- You only get one shot, so make it count.
- Hit and keep hitting.
- Dead men can't kill *you* tomorrow.
- Despite your best planning, shit happens.

Whether on America's mean streets, or inside the borders of the meaner Steel Nation, *study to survive...* and you just might.

## Appendix First Aid

The more you can look to your own needs while a guest of the Steel Nation, the better off you are. This holds true when it comes to first aid.

Many an inmate has died waiting for prison infirmary workers — nurses and orderlies — to clear the paperwork necessary to transfer a critically wounded inmate to an outside hospital for emergency surgery. More prisoners have died from staff indolence than from wounds sustained in Steel Nation combat.

Prisons seldom have doctors assigned to them fulltime and, instead rely on nurses to handle the bulk of everyday institutional ills.

To their credit, many nurses do a fine job with what little they are provided. However, other nurses, fearing lawsuits or simply not caring, will do little in the way of actually helping save your life.



If you are seriously injured, you must either *wait* for a doctor to be called to the institution or *wait* to be transferred out of the prison to a local hospital.

Therefore, if you are ever stabbed, here are some rules to *live* by:

- *Remain calm.* Movement and panic only cause your heart to beat faster, causing you to bleed to death faster.
- *Leave the knife in:* it plugs the hole, and helps staunch blood flow.
- *Keep pressure on the wound.* It might hurt like hell, but *pain* never killed anyone. Loss of blood has killed many.
- *Pack the wound in ice.* If ice is unavailable, use cold pop cans, anything to keep the wound cold and help staunch blood flow.
- *Pray.* As someone once said, "Life is just a poker game, and it can't hurt to suck up to the dealer!"

## Glossary

**Administration, The:** Those staff members running the prison (Warden, etc.), specifically, those wearing suits, as opposed to uniform-wearing correctional officers.

**Bit:** A prison sentence. Also known as "Bid."

**Bug-out:** A crazy person; to go crazy.

**Bum Rush:** To attack, especially to attack quickly and unexpectedly.

**Chastise:** To punish for a real or imagined trespass.

**Clique:** Informal prison grouping, small, less organized than formal gangs.

**Crew:** Your particular group of prison associates

**Dis:** Short for "disrespect," primarily black usage.

**Dropping a snitch-kite:** This is accomplished by secretly handing it to a staff member, or by literally "dropping"

(placing) the kite where a staff member will find it (e.g., their desk or work station), or by simply mailing it to a staff member via the intra-institution "kite" mail procedure, or by placing it in the regular mail.

**Edison Medicine:** Death by electrocution.

**Fish:** A new inmate; a first timer.

**Gas:** Energy, ability to fight.

**Gobot:** A stupid person; one easily manipulated. Combination of "Gopher" and "Robot."

**Half-step:** Failure to complete a task.

**Hole, The:** Solitary confinement.

**Make your bones:** To prove your worth, especially by committing your first murder.

**Mission:** An ill-conceived venture; a task you assign a "gobot" to.

**Mushfake:** Something of inferior quality; prisoners' arts and crafts.

**Punk:** A weak person; an effeminate homosexual.

**Reckless Eyeballin':** Expressing an interest in something, especially something that is none of your business.

**Road-dog:** A friend or partner. Also known as "Row-dog."

**Rock-to-sleep:** Ploys designed to get an enemy to drop his guard, e.g., feigning friendship.

**Shakedown:** Search; extortion

**Shank:** Any prison stabbing or cutting weapon.

**Soap-on-a-rope:** Anything that can be used as a flexible bludgeon weapon (e.g., batteries in a sock).

**Steel Nation:** Refers to prison in particular and the overall incarceration process in general.

**Steppin' on toes:** Same as "Reckless Eyeballin'."

**Swap-out:** Two-way mutual homosexual activity.

**Tax:** Same as "Chastise."

**Trickbag:** A plot in which the victim is trapped between two unattractive alternatives.

**Tush-hog:** A bully, a tough man.

**24-7:** Synonym for "forever," "all day," and "trustworthy." Refers to something or somebody that is true and can be relied on "twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week."

**Wannabe:** An inmate trying to make a name for himself, as in "He ain't nothing, but he wants to be something." See "Gobot."

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